

Attitudes and Perceptions of Educated, Urban Youth to Marriage and Sex

*Report of a survey conducted by:
Secret Sex Education Counselling Research Training and Therapy Department of
the Family Planning Association of India*

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1 Preface

So far, no co-ordinated national level studies have been carried out on the attitudes and perceptions of young people to marriage or sexual behaviour. The increasing reproductive health problems of youth such as teenage pregnancy and motherhood, abortion sexually transmitted diseases, AIDS, drug abuse and so on, point strongly to the need for sympathetic understanding and appropriate education and counselling services for young people. In this context then the availability of reliable data regarding their attitudes and opinions towards marriage and sexual behaviour would be of great use in formulating suitable educational programmes to meet these needs.

In 1988, the SECRT (Sex Education Counselling Research Training and Therapy) Department of the Family Planning Association of India (FPAI) discussed this need at a conference of selected experts and counsellors of its various SECRT Centres. It was felt that the infrastructure of FPAI and its SECRT Centres afforded an ideal opportunity to conduct a study to elicit the opinions and perceptions of youth, particularly in relation to sexuality and marriage, with a view to develop relevant educational materials and counselling programmes for

them. The SECR Centre of FPAI's Pune Branch under the leadership of Dr. A.G. Sathe and Dr. U.V. Luktuke, was selected for preparing the draft questionnaire for studying the attitudes and perceptions of urban youth regarding marriage and sexual behaviour.

The questionnaire was finalised by Dr. Mahinder C. Watsa at the SECR Centre at FPAI Headquarters after incorporating the necessary changes subsequent to a pre-test carried out by the SECR Centre at FPAI's Lucknow Branch. The final questionnaire was distributed to a random sample of 10,000 boys and girls between the ages of 15 and 29 years in selected FPAI Branch areas. Data from 3846 completed questionnaires, which were returned, were computerised and analysed by experts.

It is our sincere belief that this all-India survey will provide useful information for developing effective programmes in family life and sex education for young people.

2 Acknowledgements

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- Staff of FPAI Headquarters, Bombay and Ms. Veena Pinto, Mrs. Nina Bhasin, and Mrs. Connie Tellis of SECR who put in long hours of work.

Mahinder C. Watsa Consultant Sexuality Programmes & Head, SECR Centres, FPAI November 1990

3 Executive Summary

The urgent need to address the increasing reproductive health problems of young people, particularly in the rapidly growing cities where the Family Planning Association of India has special facilities for counselling youth through its SECRT (Sex Education Counselling Research Training and Therapy) Centres, prompted the Association's SECRT Department at the Headquarters to undertake a survey, the first of its kind, of the attitudes and perceptions of youth towards marriage and sexual behaviour. The results of such a study would provide information for designing appropriate reproductive health programmes for youth as well as for preparing educational materials for supporting these programmes.

The study covers a sample of about 3850 educated, unmarried boys and girls between 15 and 29 years of age, in selected areas in all the four regions - North, South, East and West - of the country where FPAI has SECRT Centres.

The results indicate that the attitudes of the young people in all the four regions towards marriage and sexuality are more or less the same. The high percentage of non-responses also point to the fact that few young people have given any advance thought to their sexual behaviour and its consequences, particularly at the time of entering into marriage. It is clear that guidance and knowledge about reproductive health including sexual health, is a pressing need for this important and vulnerable segment of society, and must be provided in high schools and colleges.

Contrary to the belief that great changes have occurred in the attitudes and sexual behaviour of urban youth, the survey indicates that the process of change from orthodox to liberal sexual behaviour has been slow despite the onslaught of the media and modernising influences. For example, the joint family is still desired, and "arranged" marriages with suitable modifications are still preferred. And, males and females continue to prize virginity. Yet surprisingly, many also seem to want to break away from tradition (if they can) and marry out of caste and out of religion.

A welcome attitudinal change relating to equality between marriage partners is evident, particularly among males in terms of the right of the wife to work outside the house and to make the decision to do so, sharing of household work by both partners, and in supporting the unmarried girl in the event of an unwanted pregnancy. So also, positive attitudes towards the female child, and towards family planning are indicated.

Currently, there is a lack of effective strategies for building responsible attitudes regarding reproductive behaviour among this important young age group. At present, educational strategies for the prevention of HIV infection and AIDS are being tested among youth. The findings of this survey which highlight local attitudes and future trends in sexual behaviour may be useful in the formulation of such strategies.

Finally, the survey must be recognised as being exploratory in nature, and the first such attempt covering a vital area that of reproductive health - among a vital section of the young age population in all regions of the country. The next step would be to conduct an in-depth survey, particularly of sexual practices among both urban and rural youth.

4 Introduction

India has a predominantly young population. According to one projection, in 1991 out of an estimated population of 836 million, 238 million or 28.4% are young people aged 15-29 years. This indicates an increase of 2.6% since 1981. That the youth population is growing rapidly only serves to highlight the importance of this segment of the population which represents the future of the country. Yet, to date, adolescent and youth health has not received their due attention.

The period of adolescence is generally considered to be free from health problems. In reality, most of the health problems, particularly those concerning reproductive health, emerge during this period. Due to crowded living conditions, changing aspirations, the mass media and the influence of developed nations, the youth become aware of sexual relationships early in life, but often have little factual information or understanding of its biological significance. This lends to unhealthy sexual practices and their consequences - teenage marriage, pregnancy and motherhood; sexually transmitted diseases and AIDS; drug and alcohol abuse etc. Fortunately, religious beliefs and rituals are still very much a part of our social fibre and serve as a restraining force on the relaxation of strict moral codes.

This large scale study comprising all four regions of India, provides a glimpse into the thoughts and attitudes of educated urban youth in relation to:

1. Marriage including partner selection and the practice of dowry
2. Sex roles in marriages
3. Parenthood, and

4. Sexual behaviour

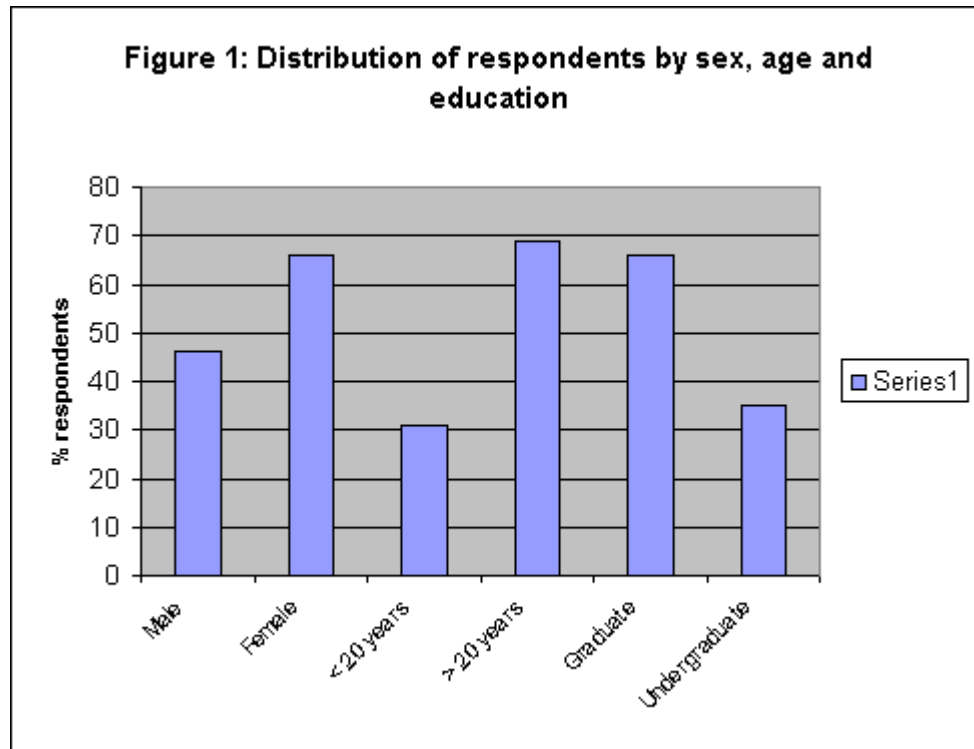
Methodology and Sample

In keeping with the aims of the study and the diversity of the population, the country was divided into four geographical zones - North, South, East and West. A few cities and large towns in each of the four zones where FPAI has SECRIT Centres or Branches, were selected for the study. These included Delhi and Lucknow in the North; Madras, Bangalore, Shimoga, Trivandrum and Hyderabad in the South; Calcutta and Patna in the East; and Bombay, Pune, Ahmedabad and Rajkot in the West. (FPAI has SECRIT Centres in Bombay, Bangalore, Delhi, Lucknow, Madras, Pune, Rajkot and Jabalpur).

A questionnaire covering the different aspects of the study was drawn up by a group of experts. The questionnaire was pre-tested at Lucknow, and the necessary changes were incorporated in the final questionnaire. The questionnaires were administered by FPAI volunteers and staff, mainly by the consultants and counsellor of the SECRIT Centres or Branch volunteers. The respondents were exposed to a programme on reproductive health at which the subject and the purpose of the survey were explained, and time was given to complete and return the questionnaire.

Around 10,000 questionnaires were distributed to young men and women who were randomly selected by the participating FPAI units in the selected cities and towns in mid-1989. However, a number of them were either not returned, returned incomplete or returned well after the closing date. This analysis then is based on 3846 completed questionnaires constituting a response of 38.6%. Zone-wise, the North had a 29.7% representation in the total study sample, the South 23.7% the West Zone comprised 40.7% of the sample, and the East Zone, only 5.9%. Although the absolute number of respondents in the East Zone is small, due to a lack of SECRIT Centres in this zone, the data is reliable. Nevertheless, generalisation of these results to the rest of the youth population in this zone should be done carefully.

A distribution of the sample in terms of sex, age and educational level is presented in [Figure 1](#). All the respondents were unmarried and between the ages of 15 and 29 years; 45% were male and 55% were females. Agewise 69% were over 20 years of age and 31% were less than 20 years, and in terms of educational background, 65% were graduates and 35% were undergraduates.



Chapter I : Attitudes of Youth Towards Marriage, Partner Selection and Dowry

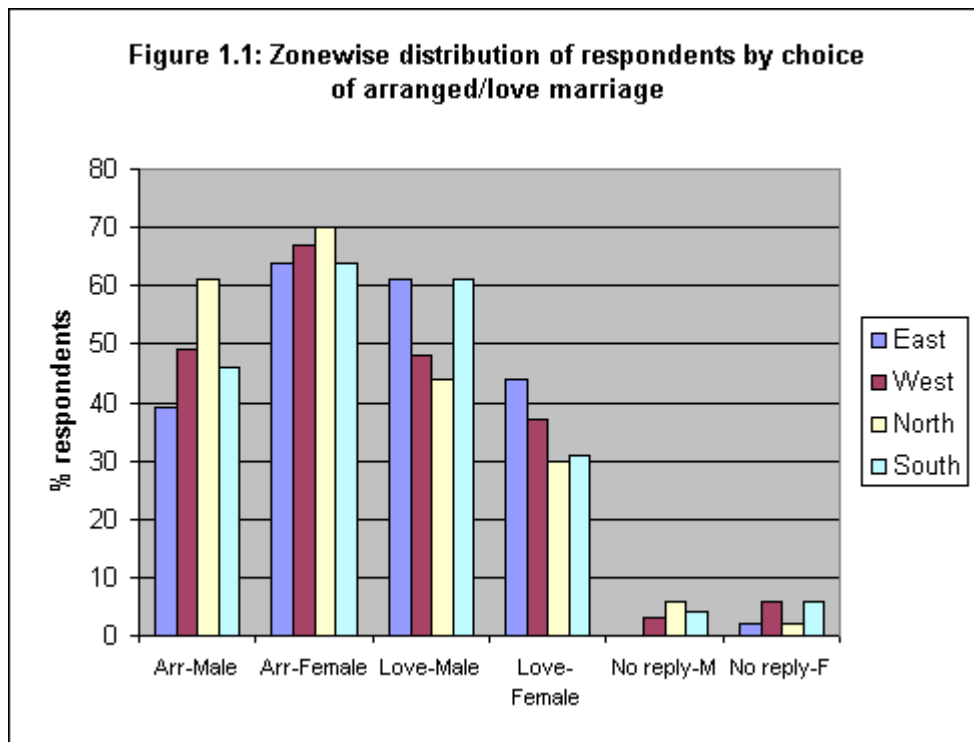
In India marriage is considered a lifelong partnership. It is the rock on which the family is built, and which, in turn, is the foundation of society. Basically, marriage is a social and legal contract. Frequently, it has very little to do with love or any other emotion; tradition, culture, religion, caste and community pressures all play an important part in the institution of marriage and the family. The caste and joint family systems continue to play a major role in Indian society. Through elaborate norms and rules, the individual's behaviour in all areas of life, including food, dress, occupation, marriage, and interactions within and outside the caste group are regulated. However, under the influence of widespread education and the mass media, young people in urban areas appear to be seeking greater freedom and independence to express themselves and to make their own decisions.

This section deals with the attitudes of young people towards marriage - both the traditional, arranged marriages and love marriages which include inter-caste and inter-religion marriages, the main reasons for entering into matrimony, as well as their views towards the practice of dowry.

Attitudes Towards Arranged and Love Marriages

An arranged marriage can be defined as one in which the marriage partner is selected by the individual's parents, either with or without his or her consent and with little or no interaction between the would-be partners prior to marriage. A love marriage on the other hand, is characterised by an absence of, or a negligible role of parents in the choice of the partner, the choice being made by the two persons getting married and with considerable interaction between them prior to marriage. Today, a combination of the two forms - a type of semi-arranged marriage is often seen, where the partner may be selected by the parents, or by the boy or girl, but there is complete involvement of the two young people and a relatively longer courtship period.

In order to assess the views held by the youth of today, the respondents were asked whether they would prefer to have an arranged or a love marriage. Interestingly, almost three-fifths (58.1%) of the respondents preferred to have their mates selected for them (arranged marriage) while 41.8% preferred to choose their own partners. More females than male respondents preferred an arranged marriage whereas a larger percentage of males as compared to female respondents desired a love marriage (Figure 1.1).



This view was uniformly observed among female respondents in all four zones with more than half indicating a preference for arranged marriages, the highest being in the North (70%), followed by the South (64%), West (57%) and East (54%) zones (Figure 1.1). Love marriages were preferred by 28% of North zone respondents, 31% of those in the South, 37% in the West, and 44% in the East. Given that people from North and South India are considered to be more conservative, these findings are not surprising.

The situation in all except the North zone was reversed in the case of male respondents. In the East and South zones, a larger number of males desired a love marriage, the proportion being 61% and 51%, and 39% and 49% for love and arranged marriages respectively. In the North, 51% of the males replied in favour of an arranged marriage while 44% showed a preference for a love marriage while those in the West zone, opted equally (48% - 49%) in favour of love and arranged marriages. These findings suggest that the expressed desires of the male respondents apparently contradict the frequent observation in real life that boys rarely marry the girls they wish to marry, and eventually settle down with their parents' choice of mate.

It must be noted however, that while the majority of the young people still seem to prefer and would perhaps even go in for the traditional arranged marriage, a considerable number have expressed views in favour of love marriages, a trend in opinion which could manifest later in actual behavioural choices.

Does education play a role in changing or influencing these attitudes? The data seems to be mixed. In all the four zones, a greater percentages of graduates as compared to undergraduates (graduates: 59%; undergraduates: 38%). However, in the East zone, while more undergraduates expressed a preference for love marriages, respondents in the South and West zones were equally divided in their views, and North zone undergraduates like their graduate counterparts, distinctly preferred an arranged marriage to a love marriage (Table 1.1).

Table 1.1: Percent distribution of respondents by preference for an arranged or love marriage, and education

	North	South	East	West	Mean
<i>Graduate</i>	62.0	56.0	57.0	61.0	59.0
Arranged marriage	35.0	40.0	41.0	36.0	38.0
Love marriage	3.0	4.0	2.0	3.0	3.0
No response					
<i>Undergraduate</i>	62.0	48.0	40.0	47.0	49.2

Arranged marriage	34.0	48.0	60.0	48.0	47.5
Love marriage	4.0	4.0	0.0	5.0	3.2
No response					

A possible explanation for the uniform finding among graduates is that with age, education and experience the young person becomes more mature and aware of social pressures, and thus more realistic about their marital preferences. It could be also that they realise that their marriage after all, still remains very much a family matter. A small proportion of the respondents - about 6 percent - chose not to answer this question, indicating that either they have not given this issue a thought or are unsure of their preferences.

When asked the reasons for their choice of an arranged or a love marriage, large majority of those who had voted in favour of arranged marriages - almost 65% of the male and 53% of the female respondents, were unable to specify why they preferred an arranged to a love marriage.

The most important reasons given by the male respondents for favouring arranged marriages were similar to those given by the female respondents namely, the desire to respect the wishes of their parents and to gain social approval (male: 14.4%; female: 12.4%); the belief that arranged marriages are more likely to succeed and longer lasting (male: 7.3%; female: 10.3%); and as a response to social or family pressures (male: 4.1%; female: 19%). About 10.4% of the female respondents also believed that their parents are more experienced and hence in a better position to choose a partner for them (Table 1.2). While the majority of the young people still seem to prefer and would perhaps even go in for the traditional arranged marriage, a considerable number have not expressed the reasons for their preference possibly since arranged marriages are considered more of a tradition which has to be carried on.

Table 1.2: Percent distribution of respondents by reasons for preferring an arranged marriage

	Males					Females				
	North	South	East	West	Mean	North	South	East	West	Mean
Respect parents wishes and gain social	12.6	14.4	15.8	15.1	14.4	12.6	9.8	16.5	11.1	12.4

approval										
More likely to succeed and longer lasting	9.7	3.3	5.3	11.0	7.3	16.0	8.7	8.6	8.0	10.3
Social/family pressure	7.0	2.1	2.6	4.8	4.1	3.0	2.8	0.7	1.3	1.9
Just prefer it	3.3	2.9	2.6	5.2	3.5	5.7	5.6	2.0	5.2	4.5
Parents more experienced	2.5	4.4	2.6	1.3	2.6	19.0	8.0	7.3	7.8	10.4
Security/stability	1.0	2.1	0	1.9	1.2	1.6	4.9	1.3	4.8	3.1
Parents responsible if failure	0.4	0.2	1.3	0	0.4	0.9	1.2	2.7	0.6	1.0
Undecided	1.7	1.2	0	1.7	1.1	9.9	1.4	7.9	1.8	5.2
No response	61.8	69.4	69.8	59.0	64.9	40.1	57.6	53.0	59.4	52.5

The single most important reason given by both male and female respondents who preferred love marriages was their strong belief that it gives the couple an opportunity to get to know each better (30.1% and 22.9%) respectively (Table 1.3). Another reason was that it represented to the individual the freedom to decide his or her own life. Yet, given the existing social culture, a young couple 'going steady' is usually viewed with censure by the elders and this could reduce their meetings to a few hurried ones, often of a clandestine nature, and thus deny them the opportunity for realistic, mutual appraisal (Table 1.3). Again a high percentage - about 56.5% of the male respondents and 68.6% of the female respondents did not state a reason for their choice of a love marriage. The high number of "No responses" to reasons for preferring a love marriage is due to the image of a love marriage created by the mass media. Another reason could be the feeling that one may desire to have a love marriage but would it be accepted by their parents or society?

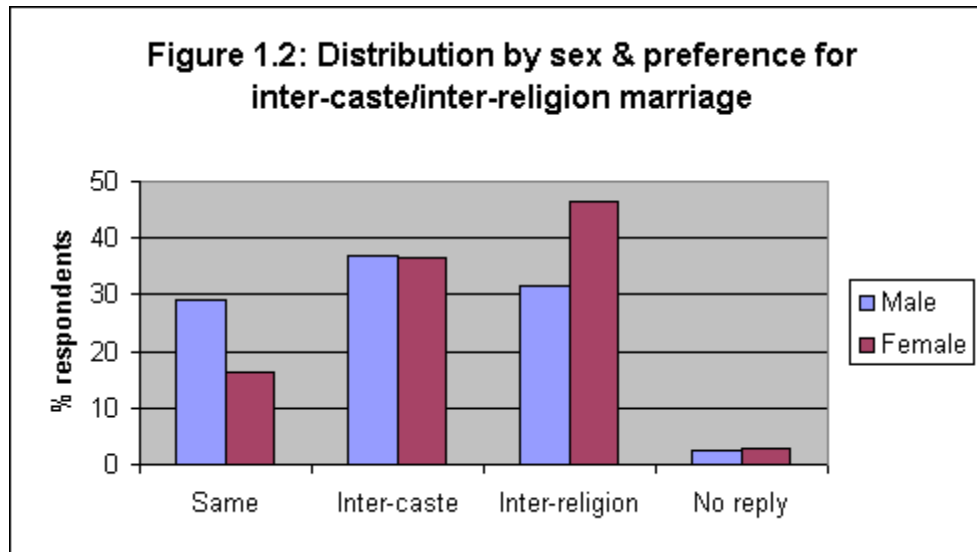
Table 1.3: Percent distribution of respondents by reasons for preferring a love marriage

Reason	Males					Females				
	North	South	East	West	Mean	North	South	East	West	Mean
Opportunity to know each other better	29.7	29.5	32.9	28.7	30.1	21.3	21.6	19.2	29.6	22.9
Simply prefer it	3.5	6.2	3.9	4.0	4.2	0.5	2.1	2.0	1.2	1.3
Freedom to decide one's life	0.1	1.9	9.2	5.2	4.4	1.7	2.3	12.0	2.0	4.4
Greater chance of succeeding	0.6	0.8	6.6	0.6	2.1	0.6	0.5	4.0	0.5	1.3
Already in love	4.5	1.7	0	1.6	1.9	1.1	0.2	0.7	0.8	0.6
Undecided	0.4	0.6	0	0.6	0.3	0	0.2	1.3	0.3	0.4
No response	57.4	51.9	42.1	56.0	56.5	74.9	73.1	60.9	65.7	68.6

Thus, many young people in urban areas continue to see many advantages in the traditional custom of arranged marriages. And yet, a significantly large number - over half - are not able to offer specific reasons for choosing one against the other. Could it be that urban influences have caused confusion in their minds? Therefore, any programme directed to changing customs or sexual behaviour is likely to meet with success if directed not to the youth alone but also to their parents and others who are closely concerned with their future; the latter will first have to accept that the change will be good for their young. Most programmes of awareness of STDs and AIDS at present, are directed to youth.

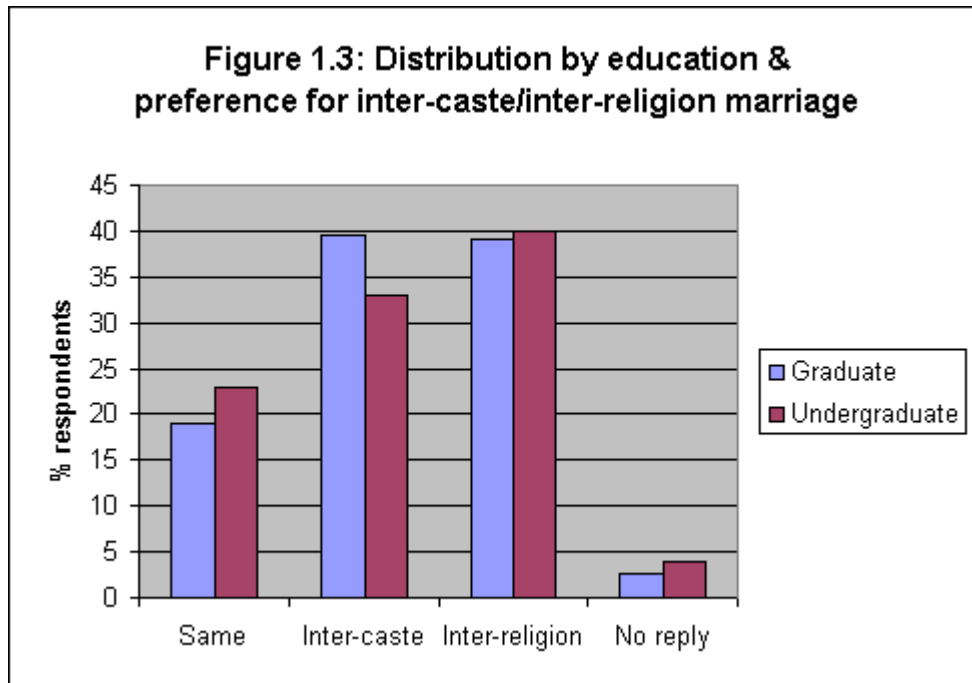
Attitude Towards Inter-Caste or Inter-Religion Marriages

For centuries the rigid caste system in India has opposed inter-caste marriages. In the last decade however, legislation and social reform have helped inter-caste marriages to occur. How do the youth of today view this issue? While between zones, no definite pattern emerged (table not presented) almost twice as many males than females were in favour of same-caste marriages, the averages being 29% and 15.4% respectively (Figure 1.2).



An almost equal percentage of male and female respondents preferred inter-caste marriages, the percentages being 37% and 36.4% respectively, while more female (45.5%) than male (31.6%) respondents opted for marrying a person of a different religion. Briefly, almost three-fourths (75%) of all respondents preferred an intercaste or inter-religion marriage to one within the same caste and religion. Zonewise too, this view was more consistently found among the female respondents who were also less in favour of marrying within their caste than the male respondents - while about out of three males preferred a same-caste marriage, twice as many females did so. These findings do not seem to conform with the earlier finding that more females than males or more respondents in general, preferred an arranged marriage, wherein one would expect the partner to be selected from the same religion and/or caste. About 3% of the sample did not respond.

Viewed in the context of their educational background, twice as many graduates preferred a partner of a different caste or religion (79%) as compared to those (19%) who preferred a partner of the same caste. Among undergraduates too, a substantial proportion - 33% and 40% - opted for a partner of a different caste and religion respectively as opposed to those (23%) who did not wish to marry outside their caste or religion (Figure 1.3). Graduates as compared to undergraduates seemed relatively more in favour of caste rather than inter-caste or inter-religion marriages (79% and 73% respectively). Almost 3% of the respondents did not answer the question.



The reasons given by the respondents for preferring partners of the same caste included (1) the belief that similarity of culture, customs and lifestyle would enable better adjustment between partners, (2) social and family pressures, (3) a means of respecting parental wishes and obtaining parental approval, (4) pride in one's own caste and religion, (5) to avoid separation from one's family of origin, and (6) the belief that there would be less chance of conflict between the spouses especially in the bringing up of children.

The reasons given by the respondents for preferring inter-caste and inter-religion marriages was the overwhelming importance they placed on mutual love and understanding between the couple, irrespective of their caste or creed, which outweighed all other considerations. Young people in love, whether graduate or undergraduate, thus seem to be prepared, at least theoretically, to override any social or caste barrier. This significant finding is contrary to existing practice and needs to be corroborated. One explanation for it could be that while young people in urban areas are responding to the pressures of modernity, their orthodox parents continue to make the decisions about their marriage partners.

Reasons for Marriage

People marry for a great number of reasons - personal or social. In the present study an attempt was made to identify the important reasons for marriage, given the diversity of culture, custom and tradition in the country, all of which affect the decision. Table 1.4 clearly shows the relative importance given by male and female respondents to the different reasons for entering into marriage.

Table 1.4: Percent distribution of male and female respondents by reasons for marrying in order of priority.

Reason	North	South	East	West	Mean
<i>Males</i>	80.0	74.0	51.6	76.0	70.4
1. Companionship	63.6	56.0	25.8	57.0	50.7
2. Sexual satisfaction	51.0	50.0	28.9	52.0	45.5
3. To lead independent life	53.1	43.0	38.7	44.0	44.6
4. To please parents	49.8	33.0	39.4	36.0	39.6
5. Social pressures	43.0	42.0	27.6	43.0	38.9
6. Security/stability	42.0	32.0	29.0	35.0	34.5
7. Parenthood	40.0	33.0	12.9	35.0	30.2
8. Prestige					
<i>Females</i>	76.0	75.0	69.3	78.0	74.5
1. Companionship	56.0	49.0	52.3	53.0	52.5
2. Security/stability	54.0	52.0	39.0	54.0	49.7
3. To lead independent life	45.0	43.0	49.0	33.0	42.5
4. Social pressures	40.0	36.0	50.5	32.0	39.6
5. To please parents	33.0	35.0	38.4	35.0	35.3
6. Parenthood	36.0	36.0	37.2	27.0	34.0
7. Sexual satisfaction	29.0	33.0	29.5	28.0	29.8
8. Prestige					

Note: The figures indicate multiple responses; "No responses" have not been included.

Seventy per cent of the male respondents rated companionship as the primary reason for marriage (Table 1.4). The second reason - a means for satisfying sexual urges was given by approximately 50%; to lead an independent life was a reason given by 45.4%; and a means of satisfying the desire for parenthood was given by 36% of the respondents.

A large majority of the female respondents (74%) also considered companionship as the main reason for marriage (Table 1.4). More than 52.5% saw marriage as a means of achieving security and stability, which was the next most important reason.

Almost 50% said it would enable them to lead an independent life. Social pressures felt by females to get married were another reason given by 42.5%. Unlike the male respondents, the female respondents did not give much

importance to marriage as a means of satisfying sexual needs. It is possible that they tend to deny or suppress the importance of their sexual needs, while more importance is given to their need for security, and for their desire for parenthood, which can give them acceptance in society.

Comparing the responses on a zonal basis, it can be seen that unlike in the North, South and West where such trends were observed among both male and female respondents, in the East there was a difference in that social and family pressures were found to have a much greater influence on the decision to get married.

Criteria for Partner Selection

In the joint family system, the parents had the task of selecting mates for their offspring. Today, in urban areas, even though marriages may frequently be arranged despite the social transition the opinion of the individuals concerned is given considerable weight when making the final decision.

People usually have certain preconceived notions about the kind of person they would like to marry. In a love marriage, where one selects one's own partner, and in an arranged marriage when one has the freedom to do so, one is most likely to choose a person who possesses the qualities that meet with one's expectations of what a potential spouse should be like. The qualities which are commonly appreciated in a partner are money, status, academic degrees implying better job opportunities or prospects, and prestige. Boys are usually attracted to a girl who has beauty, sexual responsiveness and the attributes that make a good housewife. Girls on the other hand look mainly for security, affection and tenderness.

What is the youth of today looking for or what are the factors that they give importance to, when choosing a marriage partner? To study this, the respondents were given a list of possible attributes and asked to rate them in the order of importance.

The results given in Table 1.5 show that good companionship was given the highest rating by both boys and girls from all the zones respectively. In the North 52% and 58%; South 51% and 50%; East 46% and 42%, and West 53% and 56%.

The physical appearance of the partner was rated higher by the male respondents regardless of the zone from which they came (Table 1 5): in the North, 24% and 11%, South 23% and 10%, East 32.8% and 7.2% and West 25% and 9% of male and female respondents respectively. These sex differences thus seem to be in keeping with traditional criteria for partner selection.

The partner's educational background was another important criterion. Not surprisingly, since the man is usually the breadwinner, more females than males stressed this factor: 27% and 18% in the North; 13% and 9% in the South; 30% and 9% in the East, and 22% and 13% in the West respectively (Table 1.5).

Table 1.5: Percent distribution of male and female respondents by criteria for partner selection in order of priority

Reason	North	South	East	West	Mean
<i>Males</i>	52.0	51.0	46.0	53.0	50.5
1. Good companion	24.0	23.0	32.8	25.0	26.2
2. Physical appearance	18.0	9.0	9.0	13.0	12.2
3. Education	6.0	9.0	9.2	7.0	7.8
4. Willingness to share housework	4.0	2.0	0.0	4.0	2.5
5. Professional status					
<i>Females</i>	58.0	50.0	42.3	56.0	51.5
1. Good companion	27.0	13.0	29.8	22.0	22.7
2. Education	11.0	4.0	22.0	6.0	10.7
3. Professional status	11.0	10.0	7.2	9.0	9.3
4. Physical appearance	6.0	7.0	19.0	7.0	9.7
5. Willingness to share housework					

Choosing a partner on the basis of his or her profession was also given more importance by female respondents especially in the East (22%), followed by the North (11%), West (6%), and South (4%). The corresponding percentages for the male respondents were 0%, 4%, 4% and 2% in the four zones (Table 1.5).

Based on observations of past trends and those made in this study there seems to be some change in the criteria used by males and females for partner selection. With the acceptance of greater equality between the sexes, urban educated youth seem to view marriage more as a partnership, companionship being given the greatest importance by both males and females. While physical appearance continues to be important, other factors such as the educational background and willingness to share housework are also being considered in the selection of a marriage partner.

Attitudes Towards Physical Attributes of the Partner

It cannot be denied that attraction between the sexes especially in the early stages is largely based on physical appearance. To determine the extent to which

physical characteristics play a role in one's choice of partner, the respondents were asked to rate a list of physical characteristics that they might consider while selecting a spouse in their order of importance.

Table 1.6 shows that on the whole males place much more importance on physical attractiveness than females, the average being 81.2% and 74.5% respectively. This was found to be true for all the zones. Nevertheless, female respondents in all the four zones also placed the greatest importance on this attribute and desired a "handsome" partner. Almost half wanted their marriage partners to be slim and muscular, and a third desired a spouse without spectacles. Male respondents placed great importance on pretty eyes (70.2%) - almost three-fifths wanted a girl who was fair, slim and long-haired. Interestingly, two-fifths did not want a partner who used spectacles (Table 1.6).

Table 1.6: Percent distribution of male and female respondents by physical attributes desired in partner by order or importance

Attribute	North	South	East	West	Mean
<i>Males</i>	85.3	82.1	69.7	78.5	78.9
1. Attractive	73.9	68.2	71.0	67.9	70.2
2. Pretty eyes	63.0	70.9	69.7	66.9	67.6
3. Fair	73.1	66.8	63.1	64.2	66.8
4. Slim	64.2	63.2	68.4	61.4	64.3
5. Long hair	48.1	38.8	47.3	37.1	42.8
6. Tall	49.1	36.7	23.6	51.3	40.1
7. Without spectacles	33.0	36.7	19.7	26.6	29.0
8. Large breasts	22.1	23.2	22.3	19.5	21.7
9. Large buttocks					
<i>Females</i>	74.2	67.2	77.4	79.4	74.5
1. Handsome	52.0	42.6	61.5	59.9	54.0
2. Slim	40.6	38.1	45.0	52.8	44.1
3. Muscular chest	39.7	34.1	44.3	36.1	38.5
4. Fair	29.2	32.0	34.4	45.9	35.3
5. Hairy	5.8	3.7	19.8	6.6	8.9
6. Large buttocks	36.2	25.0	32.4	38.5	33.0
7. Without spectacles					

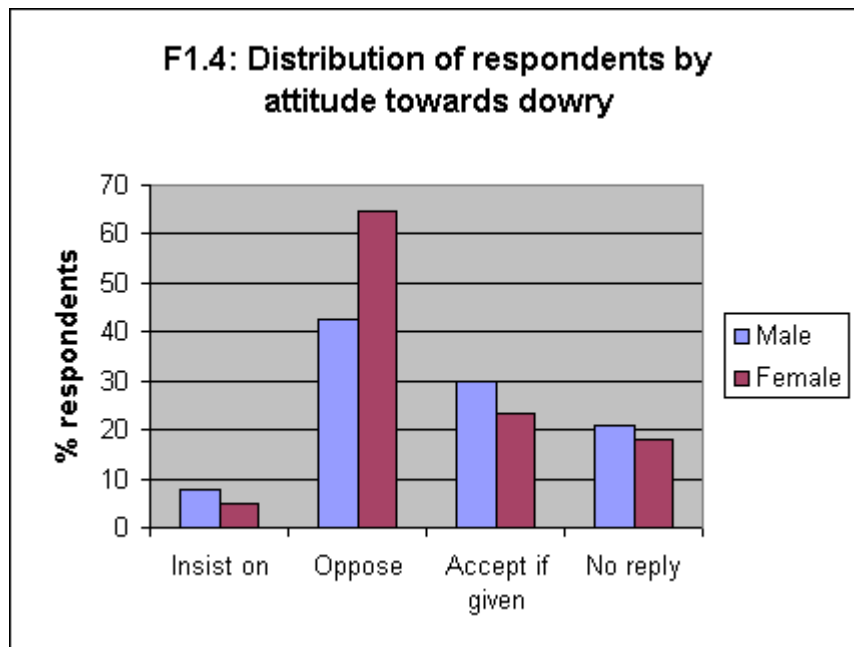
Attitudes Towards Dowry

In India the dowry system started with the intention of providing security for the daughter in case of adversity or misfortune after marriage. The parents thus voluntarily gave whatever they could to their daughter for this purpose. However, over the years, this practice has deteriorated, to an extent that the

grooms and his tasks often make exorbitant demands which, if not met after marriage result in dowry deaths.

To assess the prevailing attitudes towards dowry, the respondents were asked to give their own opinions on the practice of dowry and also to indicate what they thought were their parents' views on this issue. The percentage of respondents who said they would "insist on dowry", although low, indicate that even today, dowry continues to be favoured by some and will continue to be given and received as a precondition for marriage. Almost the same percentage of males and females in each zone endorsed the practice of dowry (table not presented).

The findings also show clearly that the female respondents had more negative attitudes towards dowry than males in all the zones. This is not unexpected in view of the fact that it is the female who is the victim of this system and is degraded by this practice. Likewise, fewer female than male respondents said that they would "accept dowry if given"; 21% of the respondents (21% male and 18% female) did not respond (Figure 1.4).



It can therefore be concluded that while there are still some who endorse the dowry system, there are many who oppose it (at least in theory) among both male and female youth, irrespective of age, education and background. The fact that dowry taking and giving is still widely prevalent can be attributed to continued social pressure, custom, and issues concerning prestige which die hard and need to be radically changed.

Education did not seem to significantly influence the attitude of the respondents to the dowry system (table not presented). However, undergraduates seemed more likely to "accept dowry if given" and (27.0% compared to 24.3% graduates) less likely to oppose its practice (45.5% and 52.0% respectively). In general, almost half of the respondents regardless of their educational background were opposed to the practice of dowry. It must be noted that an almost equal proportion (6%) of both groups stated that they would insist on a dowry, and about 20% of the sample, on average, did not respond at all.

A similar trend was observed when the respondents were asked to state the stand their parents would take on this issue. The figures obtained on a zonewise basis of the parental views opposed to dowry as judged by male and female respondents respectively, were 60% and 71% in the North, 67% and 77 in the South; 57% and 62% in the East and 61% and 78% in the West. A small percentage of parents as reported by the respondents would "insist on dowry" namely 4% and 2% of male and female parents in the North; 2% and 1% in the South; 7% and 4% in the East and 4% and 0.01% in the West and on an average 22.5% of parents in each zone would "accept dowry if given", according to the respondents.

Given the reports, even from urban areas, of a large number of dowry deaths in which the groom's parents are involved, it seems possible that the respondents were merely paying lip service to socially acceptable attitudes while they and their parents would continue to engage in such practices in reality.

Attitudes Towards Premarital Counselling

Another question posed to the respondents concerned their towards premarital counselling - would the respondents avail of the services of an organisation offering advice and information to those getting married.

The findings indicate that irrespective of sex, more than 60% of the respondents were in favour of premarital counselling, less than 30% were against it, and 10% did not respond. Zonewise differences were not evident, nor did the respondents' age affect these responses. It was interesting to observe that over 70% of those who opted for premarital counselling preferred to come for such counselling with their finance(e). When analysed by sex, while 23% of the male respondents preferred to come alone, three times as many (69%) wanted their finance to accompany them. Among the female respondents, the corresponding figures were 20% and 73%, more preferring not to receive such services alone. About 7% of both groups did not respond.

Summary

The following paragraphs present the main findings of this section on the current attitudes of the young people towards marriage and certain related issues considered in this section.

1. The majority of the respondents still seem to prefer and perhaps may even go in for a traditional arranged marriage in the future. A large number of male than female respondents wished to have a love marriage, though in reality, they eventually may marry the girl chosen by their parents. The main reason for preferring love marriages was the opportunity it provides for the boy and girl to get to know each other before marriage.
2. As many as three-fourths of the respondents said they would consider inter-caste or inter-religion marriages. This is contradictory to their expressed preference for an arranged marriage.
3. More female respondents (54%) as expected, were against the dowry system than males (42%). A similar attitude towards dowry was expressed by the respondents' as their parents' view. However, the fact that the dowry system is still widely practical contradicts these views, possibly a result of the publicity against dowry and the changing trends.
4. Both male and female respondents unanimously considered companionship as the most important aspect of marriage and a major criterion for the selection of a partner. Secondly, males gave importance to physical appearance and females considered education and professional status as more important in the marriage partner.
5. There was a positive feedback on the need for premarital counselling services. The majority of both male and female respondents expressed a strong need for it.
6. About half of those who desired such services also indicated that they would prefer their future spouse to accompany them for counselling. FPAI's SECRIT Centres have been concentrating on this activity with the purpose of inculcating responsible parenthood behaviour.

Chapter II : Attitudes of Youth Towards Sex Roles in Marriage

An important factor in conjugal harmony is the agreement between partners about their individual duties and responsibilities. This is a very delicate issue in which traditional attitudes and personal expectations play a very important role.

In the past, the husband's chief role was that of provider and protector, while the wife was the keeper of the home. Today, more and more frequently, we find women taking up work outside the home and thus sharing their husband's role of economic provider. This change had resulted in masking the clear-cut role distinction between partners.

Have these stereotype roles of husband and wife changed? How are they viewed today?

The data as presented in Panel A of Table 2.1 indicates that while a fourth of the male respondents did not answer this question, and less than a tenth held the view that the husband should work only if he is "willing and it is possible for him to do so" or if the wife was sick or in other "unexpected" (unspecified) circumstances, as many as 60% believed in sharing the housework. Of these, 35.4% were of the opinion that all work should be shared by the spouses, almost 20% felt that all except, kitchen work (i.e. cooking and cleaning) should be shared, and a small proportion (4.7%) felt that the work should be equally shared because they perceived the husband and wife as equal partners.

Zone-wise, while an almost similar order of importance in views was observed among male North, West and East zone respondents, South zone respondents were least inclined among others to share housework, and those from all except the East zone were found to hold much stronger beliefs that doing housework was socially unacceptable for men.

The attitude of female respondents towards housework is presented in Panel B of Table 2.1. the findings indicate that more female (65.1%) as compared to male (59.9%) respondents believed in sharing work either as equal partners (21.6%) or because the wife works outside the home (10 5%), while 11.4% believed in sharing all the work, 7.6% felt that kitchen work need not be shared by the husband, and about 14.0% were of the view that sharing makes work easier and brings the couple closer. Interestingly also, more female (9.6%) than male respondents (6.4%) on average, considered it socially unacceptable for a man to perform household work.

Table 2.1: Percent distribution of male and female respondents by attitude towards household work

No. Attitude	North	South	East	West	Mean
A. Males					
1. All work should be shared	42.3	39.2	26.2	33.6	35.4

2. All except kitchen work to be shared	15.9	12.9	30.1	20.4	19.8
3. Husband to work only if willing and possible	7.9	3.9	10.4	7.1	7.3
4. Man doing housework is socially unacceptable	7.5	6.2	3.8	7.9	6.4
5. Equal partners equal work	3.9	4.1	6.4	4.6	4.7
6. Husband to share work only if wife sick or in unequal circumstances	3.5	4.3	--	3.7	2.9
7. No response	19.0	29.4	23.1	22.7	23.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<u>B. Females</u>					
1. Equal partners equal work	25.8	23.4	15.6	21.4	21.6
2. All work should be shared	9.9	10.0	21.1	4.7	11.4
3. Since wife works husband should share housework	11.6	10.3	8.6	11.8	10.5
4. Man doing housework socially unacceptable	9.6	8.6	7.2	13.2	9.6
5. Co-operation and sharing makes work easy	9.5	7.9	9.8	8.0	8.8
6. All except kitchen work should be shared	8.1	4.9	9.1	8.3	7.6
7. Sharing brings couples closer	5.4	6.0	4.6	5.0	5.2
8. No response	20.1	28.9	24.0	27.6	25.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

The figure indicate multiple responses.

Zonewise, female respondents from the West zone did not have as strong a feeling as those in other zones that housework must be shared (Table 1.1, Panel B). Moreover, more respondents in the West zone than in other zones felt that it was socially, unacceptable for a man to do housework.

The results show that a large majority (85%) of female respondents on average, felt that the wife should work after marriage, while a very small percentage (3%) felt that she should not; 12% of the respondents did not answer. These attitudes were consistently held by female respondents from all the four zones.

Various reasons were given by them for holding such views. While a third (32%) held the view that it was a woman's right to work, over a fifth (21.8%) felt that working after marriage would be a means of gaining independence and self respect, and about, and about an equal proportion (23.7%) thought it necessary to work for economic reasons. A few viewed it as a means by which the family could indulge in a few luxuries (6 1%) and even fewer (3.5%) felt it would mean using their education, time and talents fruitfully. Inter-zone differences were not evident.

When the male respondents were asked whether the decision to take up a job or continue it after marriage should be left entirely to the wife or whether the husband alone should decide, an average of 24% of the male respondents, ranging from 21% in the South zone to 29% in the East zone held the view that the husband alone should make this decision (Table 2.2).

Table 2.2: Percent distribution of male respondents by who will decide whether the wife should work after marriage

Decision about wife's working to be taken by	North	South	East	West	Mean
Husband alone	22.0	21.0	29.0	24.0	24.0
Wife alone	64.0	64.0	37.0	64.0	57.0
Jointly	8.0	10.0	20.0	10.0	12.0
No response	6.0	5.0	14.0	2.0	7.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Notably, over half of them on average (57.2%) thought that this decision should be left solely to the wife, while 12% preferred a joint decision. The East zone respondents were the least inclined compared to those in other zones to leave this decision to the wife. (37% compared to 64% from other zones), though they were more inclined to make joint decisions (20%) as compared to their

counterparts in other zones (9.3%). By and large, male respondents expressed positive attitudes towards their wives continuing or taking up social work and hobbies after marriage (Table 2.3).

Table 2.3: Percent distribution of male and female respondents by attitude to the wife's taking up social work or hobbies after marriage

	North	South	East	West	Mean
A. Males					
Social Work :	67.0	70.0	85.0	69.0	72.7
Yes	8.0	11.0	3.0	8.0	7.5
No	25.0	19.0	12.0	23.0	19.8
No response					
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Hobbies	75.0	75.0	45.0	75.0	67.5
Yes	4.0	7.0	9.0	5.0	6.2
No	21.0	18.0	46.0	20.0	27.3
No response					
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
B. Females					
Social Work :	44.0	51.0	44.0	41.0	45.0
Yes	3.0	4.0	5.0	3.0	3.7
No	20.0	14.0	30.0	22.0	21.5
If husband allows	33.0	31.0	21.0	34.0	29.8
No response					
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Hobbies	74.0	66.0	57.0	66.0	65.8
Yes	1.0	0.0	7.0	1.0	2.2
No	10.0	9.0	19.0	17.0	13.7
If husband allows	15.0	25.0	17.0	16.0	18.3
No response					
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

On average, about 73% and 67% were in favour of the wife taking up some social work or hobby respectively after marriage. Although those said "No" to either activity being taken up by the wife is quite low - about 6% to 7% (and about 25% did not answer the questions), it still points to the prevalence of narrow-mindedness and authoritarianism in a section of our society. A marked difference was seen in the responses obtained from the East Zone (Table 2.3) in that while the largest proportion (85%) approved of social work for their wives

post-marriage, a significantly low percentage (45%) approved of hobbies as compared to their counterparts in other zones (75%).

Among the female respondents 45% felt that the wife could take up social work and 66% said that she should pursue a hobby (Table 2.3). As many as 21.5% and 13.7% felt that the wife should pursue social work or a hobby respectively, only if her husband permits her to. This finding seems to indicate that many women expect to be dominated by their husbands and thus allow him to do so. This, in turn, could lead to self-fulfilling behaviour on the part of the husband and hence the attitude of superiority observed. These trends were observed among male and female respondents in all the four zones.

Summary

The major findings concerning the attitudes of young people towards sex roles in marriage are that a large majority of the female respondents stated that they would continue working after marriage as it is their right. A few due to economic pressures felt it necessary to supplement family income, and some gave importance to independence and self respect. Very little emphasis was given for utilising their education and talents as a reason for continuing to work after marriage.

Nevertheless it is encouraging to observe that women are moving towards finding their own identity. Though our society is male dominated, the majority of the young male respondents felt that the wife alone should decide about her working after marriage. About a fifth felt that it was for the men to decide if the wife would work or not after marriage, while very few thought that it should be joint decision. Regarding the taking up of social work or hobbies, by and large, the males responded positively though the females themselves were not sure; about half of them felt that they would continue such activities while the rest said they would do so only if their husbands allowed it, which seems more realistic.

Chapter III : Attitudes of Youth Towards Parenthood

This section reports the views of the respondents regarding the choice of residence after marriage, family planning and child spacing, and the relative importance given to sons as compared to daughters. The general trend has been in the direction of living in a joint family, giving little or no importance to family planning or child spacing, and preferring sons to daughters.

Attitude Towards Choice of Residence After Marriage

Indian society being patriarchal, it is customary for the woman to take her husband's name and to leave her home upon marriage and reside with her husband and in-laws in a joint family. However, with increasing urbanisation and industrialisation, there has been a gradual breaking up of the joint family and the concept of the nuclear family has become increasingly popular.

In this study, while almost one third (31%) of the male respondents expressed a preference for living independently, twice as many (65%) opted for living with their parents after their marriage. On the other hand, though a greater proportion of female as compared to male respondents (41%) wished to live independently, as many as half (52%) preferred to live with the in-laws; the remaining 4% in each group did not respond.

It can thus be concluded that while an appreciable proportion of the male and an even larger proportion of the female respondents were in favour of living independently after marriage, overall, both tended to favour joint family living. As expected, a very small percentage of females (3%) said they would like to stay with their own parents after marriage. These trends were found to be similar among respondents in all four zones. The desire for joint family system was more prominent in the East zone as compared to other zones, especially among males.

Attitude Towards Family Planning

The term family planning essentially includes planning the size of one's family including child spacing and limitation. When provided with several alternative responses and asked when they would begin using a family planning method, 25.8% of the male respondents, the single largest group, said that they would do so only after having two children (Table 3.1). Interestingly, about 40% of the respondents said they would plan their families, either soon after marriage (21.2%), or just before marriage (18.8%). About 5.8% said they would never use contraception and a marginal 1.9% did not give any-response (Table 3.1).

Table 3.1: Percent distribution of male and female respondents and future practice of family planning

When FP will be practiced	Males					Females				
	North	South	East	West	Mean	North	South	East	West	Mean
Just before marriage	17.1	21.7	18.4	18.2	18.8	13.2	15.9	10.6	15.7	13.8

Immediately after marriage	26.8	23.6	14.4	20.2	21.2	39.2	36.5	38.4	35.1	37.3
After one child	18.3	22.8	10.5	20.0	17.9	18.2	19.4	21.1	21.3	20.0
After two children	25.4	20.7	27.6	29.5	25.8	22.3	16.8	26.4	17.8	20.8
After three children	4.9	3.5	17.1	6.8	8.0	1.5	1.4	0.6	1.2	1.1
Never	5.1	4.3	10.5	3.4	5.8	2.1	3.2	0.6	2.4	2.0
No response	2.0	3.1	1.0	1.5	1.9	3.1	6.5	3.0	6.3	4.7

Among female respondents, almost half as compared to 40% of the male respondents were in favour of family planning practice - two-fifths (37.3%) stated that they would do so immediately after marriage? (37.3%), and 13%, just before marriage. An almost equal proportion (20%) said that they would do so after one/two child(ren) and about 2% said they would never use any method. Comparing the responses of male and female respondents it appears that females are much more aware of the importance of family planning in marriage. Another important conclusion is that a very small percentage of the respondents realised the importance of planning a family from the time of marriage.

Zone-wise, while female respondents held more or less similar views, male respondents in the East zone were less inclined to practice family planning soon after marriage, or after one or two children than their counterparts in the other zones. Also, as compared to the other three zones, more East zone males said they would practice family planning only after three children, and were more likely to never use contraceptives.

The responses of graduates and undergraduates to the same question are presented in Table 3.2. The findings indicate that while about 45% of both graduates and undergraduates said they would plan their families from the time of marriage, as many as 45.5% of the former as compared to 39.6% of the latter said they would do so after one or two children. These trends were more marked in the case of West zone respondents. Potential "never" users were also slightly more among undergraduates (4.8%) than among graduates (2.6%). Again, as seen in Table 3.2, more undergraduates than graduates in the East zone showed an inclination to practice family planning only after three children.

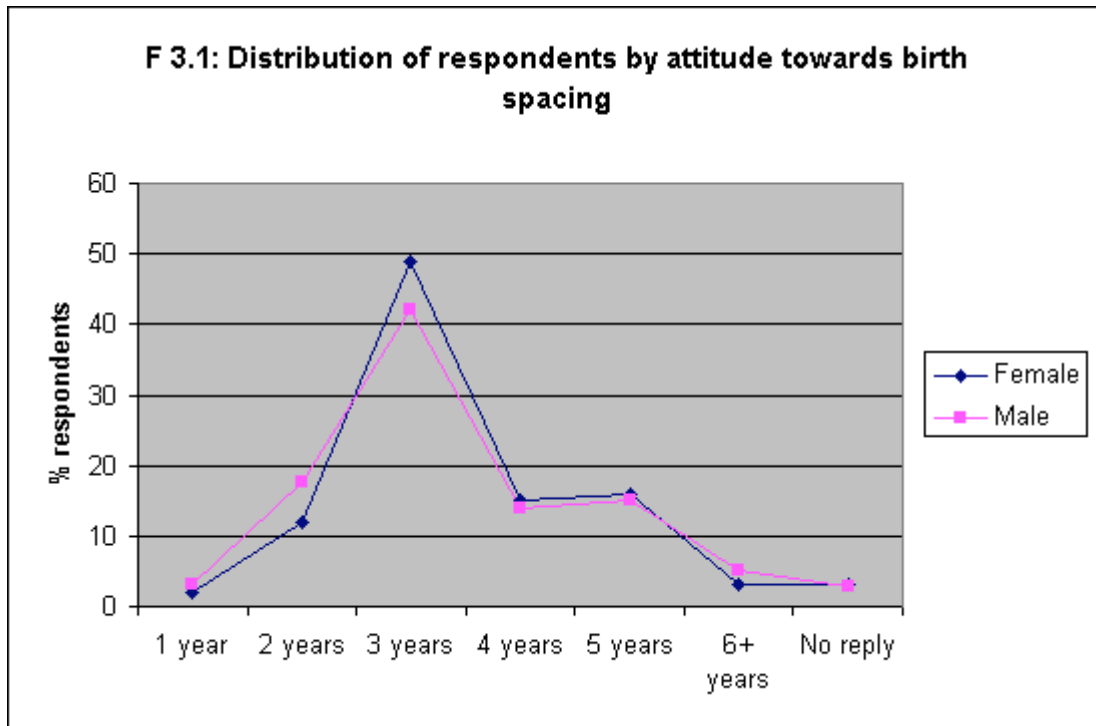
Table 3.2: Percent distribution of respondents by educational level and future practice of family planning

When FP will be practiced	Graduates					Undergraduates				
	North	South	East	West	Mean	North	South	East	West	Mean
Just before marriage	14.8	16.7	11.5	15.3	14.5	15.6	27.0	14.2	18.0	18.7
Immediately after marriage	34.6	32.1	32.2	23.3	30.5	31.6	20.4	28.5	33.9	28.6
After one child	18.6	21.4	15.7	28.4	21.0	16.8	20.9	20.0	13.2	17.7
After two children	23.3	18.3	33.8	22.8	24.5	24.6	20.9	19.0	23.1	21.9
After three children	3.0	2.7	1.6	5.2	3.1	2.7	1.6	11.4	2.9	4.6
Never	3.2	3.3	1.6	2.4	2.6	3.9	5.5	6.6	3.3	4.8
No response	2.1	5.1	3.3	2.3	3.2	4.6	3.3	0.0	5.9	3.4

The fact that a considerable number of the young respondents feel that family planning should coincide with marriage or the birth of the first child, strongly points to the need for well-planned educational programmes for young people in order to reinforce this attitude, to encourage discussion on family size between the to-be-married and newly marrieds, as well as to provide further information to help them to act responsibly at the right time. Since it usually falls upon the wife to look after and raise the children, while at the same time, with the changing values and conditions, she may need to work or pursue her career before she starts bearing children, this need becomes even more urgent.

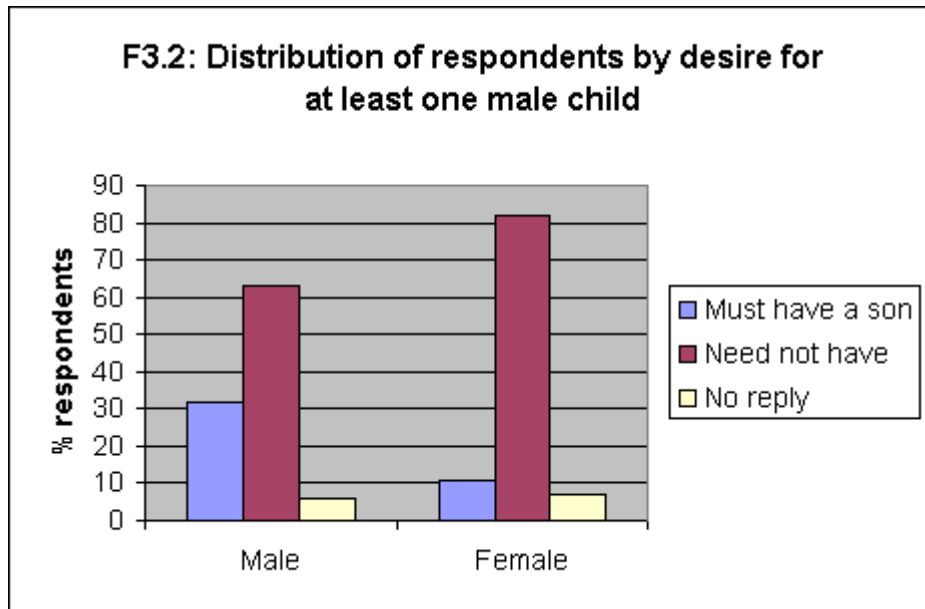
Attitude Towards Birth Spacing

Figure 3.1 summarises the findings in relation to what the respondents believed should be the ideal gap between the birth of one child and another.



The responses given by the male respondents in order of importance were: 3 years (41.7%), 2 years (17.0%), 5 years (15.5%); 4 years (14%); more than 5 years (5.5%), 1 year (2.7%) and 2.5% did not respond. Among the female respondents, the following order of importance was obtained: 3 years (48%); 5 years (17%); 4 years (15.5%); 2 years (12%); more than 5 years (3.2%); 1 year (1.5%) and 3.2% did not respond.

The findings presented in [Figure 3.2](#) indicate that both male and female respondents considered a three-year interval as ideal - the former constituted an average of 41.7% and the latter, 48%. This view was consistently held by respondents in all the four zones. Besides, there was also uniformity in the attitudes of male and female respondents in all four zones in viewing a gap of one year between children as least desirable.



When the respondents' attitudes towards child spacing were compared on the basis of their educational background, a similar picture was obtained (table not presented). Once again, both graduates and undergraduates viewed a three-year gap as ideal and a one year gap as least desirable. This could also be due to the efforts made by media for the use of contraceptives to have three year interval between the first and the second child.

Importance of Having a Son

What is the relative importance given to male and female children in India? The practice of female infanticide in ancient India and the stronghold of the dowry system are indicators that the male child or a son was more welcome in a family than a daughter. Is this situation still applicable today? To assess this, the respondents were asked to state how important it was for them to have a son if one had already got daughters.

The answers presented in [Figure 3.2](#) reveal that on average, three times as many (32%) male respondents than female Respondents (11%) considered that having at least one son was important. On the other hand, the majority - 63% of the male and 82% of the female respondents on average, felt otherwise; a small proportion did not respond.

These attitudes were found to exist in all the four zones. Further, among males, more East zone respondents considered it important to have at least one son (42%) than those in other zones (range: 25%-33%), while among female respondents, more South zone respondents considered a son as important. Nevertheless, on average, it seems that the attitudes of the youth of today are not

overly biased towards male children. This is a significant attitude change, which needs to be confirmed.

Table 3.3: Distribution of respondents who by importance given to trying to beget a son

Practice FP after	Males					Females				
	Nort h	Sout h	East	West	Mean	Nort h	Sout h	East	West	Mean
After one daughter	49.7	54.5	40.7	44.4	47.3	65.8	52.2	50.3	54.6	55.7
After one daughters	26.2	17.2	28.9	28.4	25.1	16.6	11.7	33.7	14.2	19.0
After three daughters	3.7	1.4	10.5	5.3	5.2	0.9	1.4	0.6	1.1	1.0
After four daughters	0.6	0.8	3.9	1.1	3.2	0	0	0	0	0
Till a son is born	4.3	3.7	9.2	4.3	5.3	0.9	0.7	1.3	0.9	0.9
No response	15.2	22.2	6.5	16.2	15.0	15.1	33.4	13.9	28.5	22.7

Table 3.3 indicates that repeated attempts to beget a son would progressively decrease as the number of daughters already born increases. This was more marked in the case of females than males. Though no apparent differences were noticed among graduates and undergraduates in this regard, the East zone respondents seemed to hold more traditional attitudes in this regard than their counterparts in other zones. Male respondents in the East zone were the least likely as compared to their counterparts in other zones to accept family planning after one daughter, and also considered a son important enough with 9.2% (as compared to 4% of the others) stating that they would not plan their family till a son was born.

The four reasons given by the respondents for regarding sons as important were for maintaining the continuity of the family line, security during old age, an economic asset, in that order. A negligible proportion mentioned that one son and one daughter is the ideal family composition.

Table 3.4 shows that more women than men feel that sons and daughters are equal: 25% males compared to 39% females feel this. We see a changing trend in attitudes, which was not so prevalent in India. Another interesting observation is that compared to other zones, 45% of the female respondents in the East zone

considered both sons and daughters as equal while the majority of the male respondents (21%) considered a small family important.

Table 3.4: Percent distribution of male and female respondents by reason give for not repeatedly trying to get a male child

Reason	North	South	East	West	Mean
A. Males					
1. Both sons and daughter are equal	29.0	24.5	18.4	27.6	25.0
2. Small family is more important	10.0	13.0	21.0	8.5	8.6
3. No assurance of a son	3.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	4.5
4. Daughter more loving/responsible	2.0	2.5	4.0	8.0	4.1
5. Parenthood more important than child's sex	5.0	5.6	0	5.0	4.0
6. Upbringing more important than child's sex	2.6	3.0	1.0	2.0	2.1
7. Prefer daughters	1.5	2.0	0	4.0	2.0
8. Sons and daughters are equally capable	3.0	2.0	0	0.5	1.4
9. Can't say	4.0	1.4	1.0	4.0	2.6
10. No response	19.0	21.0	20.0	16.0	19.0
B. Females					
1. Both sons and daughters are equal	41.6	33.0	45.0	38.0	39.4
2. Daughter more loving/responsible	12.0	4.0	6.0	8.0	7.0
3. Parenthood more important than child's sex	5.0	6.0	2.6	8.0	5.4
4. Small family more important	5.0	6.5	4.0	6.0	5.4
5. Upbringing more important than	5.0	1.5	3.0	5.0	3.6

child's sex					
6. Sons and daughters equally capable	3.0	2.0	4.6	2.0	3.0
7. No assurance of son	4.0	1.0	0	5.0	2.5
8. Prefer daughter	1.0	4.0	0	3.0	2.0
9. Can't say	2.0	2.0	12.0	1.0	4.0
10. No response	12.0	27.0	11.0	18.0	17.0

Summary

The major findings of the views of youth regarding their future role as parents are given below.

1. Though the majority of both male and female respondents still prefer to live with the boy's parents, there is a changing trend towards nuclear families due to urbanisation.
2. Attitudes towards family planning also seem to be changing, probably due to the publicity given to it by the mass media. There is a general awareness among the youth as 40% and 50% of male and female respondents respectively stated that they would plan their family soon after or just before marriage.
3. Both male and female respondents felt that there should be three-year interval between successive births.
4. The majority of male and female respondents considered sons and daughters as equal. This is a significant attitudinal change. Male respondents in the East zone, though small in number in the total sample, thought it more important to have a small family than to have one with a desired sex composition.

Chapter IV : Sexual Attitudes and Behaviour of Youth

Youth is the period when awareness and feelings towards members of the opposite sex are heightened and play an important role in social and sexual conduct. In urban areas, the comparatively liberal views of individuals as a result of exposure to the mass media and the prevailing co-educational system have resulted in considerable intermingling between the sexes. Coupled with this, are the scientific advances, which have liberated women from the burden of forced motherhood through the use of effective contraception. All these factors could

play a role in changing the sexual behaviour and values of youth. An attempt was therefore made to gauge the sexual attitudes and behaviour of urban youth.

Friendship with the Opposite Sex

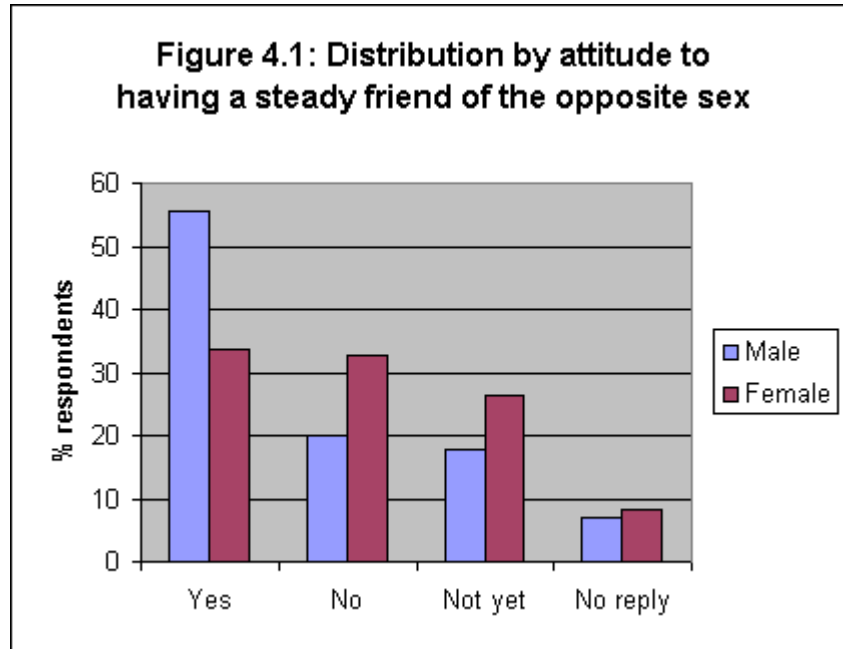
The respondents were asked whether they had or would like to have a steady boy/girl friend. Table 4.1 indicates that more than half of the male respondents in each zone except in the South, were in favour of close friendships with the opposite sex, whereas the female respondents appeared to be more conservative and only a third favoured such a relationship. Respondents, both male and female in the East zone constituted the largest proportion in favour of friends of the opposite sex as compared to other zones.

Table 4.1: Percent distribution of respondents by attitude towards having a steady friend of the opposite sex by age and sex

	North	South	East	West	Mean
A. Sex					
Males	58.0	48.1	63.1	53.0	55.5
Yes	20.0	22.8	21.0	19.8	20.9
No	18.0	22.2	9.2	21.5	17.7
Not yet	4.0	6.8	6.5	5.5	5.9
No response					
Females	35.5	28.5	40.4	30.5	33.6
Yes	35.0	40.0	29.1	26.6	32.6
No	23.0	20.1	23.1	35.4	25.4
Not yet	6.0	11.2	7.2	7.3	8.4
No response					
B. Age in Years					
Below 20	38.0	39.4	37.1	35.6	37.5
Yes	34.0	26.3	30.9	22.3	28.3
No	23.0	21.2	25.6	35.1	26.2
Not yet	6.0	13.0	6.1	6.8	7.9
No response					
Above 20	52.0	38.0	58.4	45.7	48.5
Yes	24.0	35.9	22.1	24.9	26.7
No	5.0	21.5	7.9	23.3	14.4
Not yet	19.0	4.4	11.5	6.6	10.3
No response					

About a fifth of the male respondents opined that they were against having a girlfriend; again, females (females from the East and West being more

conservative than those in other zones) were against having boy friends. A relatively good percentage of boys (17.7%) and girls (25.4%) indicated that they were not against such close friendships, but would prefer to have them at a later age (Figure.4.1).



The study also attempted to find out whether age plays a role in influencing such attitudes and behaviour. The results seem to indicate that it does (Table 4.1). On average, 37.5% of respondents below 20 years and 48.5% of those above 20 years were in favour of having steady opposite sex friendships. These differences were consistently obtained in the North, East and West zones. It seems therefore that the older respondents are more open to developing a close friendship with an individual of the opposite sex. No significant differences were obtained on the basis of education (table not presented).

How do males react to the idea or knowledge of their younger sister's having a boy friend? The results as presented in Table 4.2 indicate considerable interzonal differences in the views expressed.

Table 4.2: Percent distribution of male and female respondents by attitude towards younger sister having a boy friend

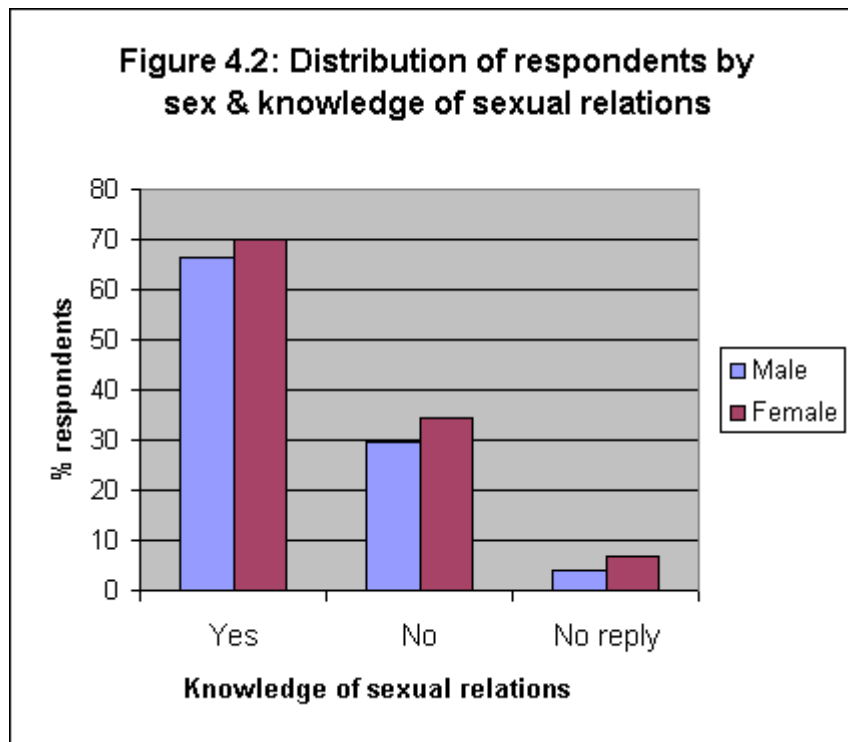
	North	South	East	West	Mean
<i>Males</i>	38.6	47.9	60.5	38.9	46.4
Yes	51.6	45.4	35.5	52.7	46.3

No	9.7	6.6	3.9	8.2	7.3
No response					
<i>Females</i>	49.2	39.8	28.4	50.1	41.8
Yes	46.9	49.6	63.5	42.7	50.6
No	3.7	10.5	7.9	7.1	7.6
No response					

Males in the North (38.6%) and in the West (38.9%) were found to be more conservative in their attitudes than those in the South (44.9%) and East (60.5%) who were more open to the idea. However, the opposite reaction was observed among female respondents and 49.2% and 50% in the North and West respectively found it acceptable whereas in the East, more males found it acceptable (60.5%) compared to females (28.4%).

Again, more males (47%) than females (42%) accepted the idea of their younger sister having or going out with a boy friend. Age and education did not seem to influence these responses.

Knowledge About Sexual Relations



Do young people know about sexual intercourse? In general it was found that the majority of respondents did have some knowledge of sexual relations. More males (66.3%) claimed to have such knowledge than females (60%) (Figure 4.2

and Table 4.3). Thus, over a fourth of the male and a third of the female respondents stated that they did not know what intercourse is.

Table 4.3: Percent distribution of male and female respondents who reported to "have knowledge of sexual relations"

	North	South	East	West	Mean
Males	80.3	75.5	32.8	76.8	66.3
Yes	17.7	20.5	60.5	20.0	29.6
No	1.8	3.9	6.5	3.1	4.1
No response					
Females	72.3	52.9	56.2	58.3	59.9
Yes	24.6	40.7	37.7	34.9	34.4
No	3.0	6.3	5.9	6.7	5.7
No response					

Since it is well known that very few parents take on the responsibility of providing sex education to their children, it can be concluded that films, magazines, books and friends, all of which are easily accessible, are the sources of such information for the youth.

It must be noted that in the East a significantly lower percentage of males was found to have some knowledge of sexual relations and 60.5% were not aware of it. Interestingly, female respondents in the East were not so ignorant as compared to their counterparts in other zones; South zone females being the least (40.7%) knowledgeable in this regard. However, since the number of respondents from the East was very small, the results need to be treated with caution. Another finding that emerged was that more males and females in the North than in any other zone, claimed to have knowledge of sexual relations, even though they are believed to be more "protected". Knowledge of sexual relations did not seem to be influenced by age.

Pregnancy Before Marriage

Greater freedom and opportunities to mix with members of the opposite sex and the influence of the mass media has contributed to the recent spurt in unwed adolescent pregnancies. How would the young girl or boy caught out in such a situation deal with it? Both male and female respondents were asked to indicate the course of action they would take if their relationship resulted in a pregnancy. The respondents were required to select one item from a list of alternative choices of action.

The findings in Table 4.4 indicate that with minor inter-zonal variations, on an average, 42% of the males said they would marry the girl in question; 18% said they would consult their parents in the matter before taking any decision; 13% said they would consult the family doctor, and around 17% did not respond.

In the case of female's respondents, around 34% said they would consult their parents; 32% said they would ask the boy to marry them; 2.5% said they would go in for an abortion, and about 20% did not respond. Once again a consistency in responses was obtained among all the four zones.

Table 4.4: Percent distribution of respondents by action that would be taken if girl friend/self became pregnant by respondent's sex and age

Action to be taken	North	South	East	West	Mean
A. Sex					
Males	47.5	41.9	44.7	34.0	42.0
1. Marry the girl	16.1	18.6	14.4	23.0	18.0
2. Speak to your parents	13.0	9.5	17.1	13.0	13.1
3. Take her to a doctor	7.4	4.5	7.8	4.0	5.9
4. Leave her to handle the problem	3.3	3.3	1.3	4.0	2.9
5. Speak to girl's parents	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
6. Ask her to find an abortion clinic	12.6	21.9	14.7	20.0	17.3
7. No response					
Females	39.5	26.4	25.8	43.7	33.8
1. Speak to your parents	34.2	22.0	49.6	25.4	32.8
2. Ask the boy to marry you	3.3	11.2	2.6	5.2	5.5
3. Seek advice from girlfriend	4.0	5.3	3.9	2.8	4.0
4. Consult family doctor	1.6	1.4	5.9	1.3	2.5
5. Have an abortion	17.0	33.4	11.9	21.2	20.8
6. No response					
B. Age in Years					
Below 20	44.2	27.1	26.8	41.3	36.3
1. Speak to your parents	32.2	17.1	51.5	22.7	30.8
2. Marriage	3.0	14.1	2.0	6.2	6.3
3. Seek advice from a girlfriend	2.8	6.1	2.0	2.4	3.3
4. Consult a doctor	11.8	0.7	5.1	0.9	2.1
5. Find an abortion clinic	15.7	34.7	12.3	20.3	17.6

6. No response					
Above 20	38.3	30.3	47.1	29.9	36.4
1. Marriage	31.0	25.1	24.5	37.4	29.5
2. Speak to your parents	6.0	4.0	7.0	3.0	5.0
3. Consult a doctor	3.8	7.1	3.7	3.6	4.5
4. Seek advice from a girlfriend	1.2	2.5	7.5	2.1	3.3
5. Find an abortion clinic	19.1	30.3	9.4	23.2	20.5
6. No response					

Among the conclusions that can be drawn from these the findings are: First, marriage is the first option to get out of such a situation for males and only the second choice of action for females. Second, females are more likely than males to turn to their parents for help. Third, while a small percentage of females will consider having an abortion, none of the males it appears, would suggest recourse to such an action. Comparing the responses of respondents above and below 20 years, the latter were more likely to turn to their parents for help and guidance, while the former would consider marriage as the best solution.

A possible explanation for the difference in the responses of females and males is the greater realisation of females of their predicament and the social stigma associated with it as compared to the male, and consequently, their stronger need to remove all evidence of their sexual activity. Finally, it must be noted that a very small but definite percentage of males would leave the girl to handle the problem all on her own. In real life however, given the recent figures for abortion among unmarried girls it is very likely that both males and females would see abortion as the best and safest alternative.

Attitudes Towards Premarital Sex

In our society sexual relations are regulated through the institution of marriage and hence premarital sex is disapproved and discouraged while the virtue of virginity is upheld. Social and religious sanctions against premarital sex have traditionally been strong deterrents to its practice. Yet exposure to western ways of life and sexual conduct, could have an influence on one's attitudes and behaviour. What are the prevailing attitudes of young people regarding premarital sex?

The results of the survey reveal an attitude that is not wholly against premarital sexual relations. As is clear from Table 4.5, on average, 16% of the male and 4.8% of the female respondents held the view that both men and women must have sexual relations before marriage. Thus a 3:1 ratio of males and females are in favour of premarital sex. A fifth of both male and female respondents were

unable to give a specific reply. Yet the fact remains that the majority do not agree with this view 53.5% males and 74.6% of females on average disagreed.

Table 4.5: Percent distribution of male and female respondents by agreement to the statement, "Both young men and women must have sex before marriage"

	North	South	East	West	Mean
<i>Males</i>	13.2	19.7	10.5	20.5	15.9
Agree	52.2	40.0	68.4	53.6	53.5
Disagree	26.0	24.7	10.5	17.9	19.7
Can't say	8.4	15.9	10.5	7.8	10.6
No response					
<i>Females</i>	6.1	6.7	3.3	3.4	4.8
Agree	76.1	66.5	81.4	74.4	74.6
Disagree	12.6	14.2	12.5	12.1	12.8
Can't say	4.9	12.4	2.6	9.9	7.4
No response					

These trends were consistently seen in each of the four zones. That a good number of the respondents (19.7%-of males and 12.8% of females) were unable to take a definite stand on this issue is probably an indication of considerable uncertainty among the youth of in areas relating to sexual behaviour. Age and educational background were not found to play a significant role respondents both above and below 20 years (65%), as well as those who were graduates, and undergraduates (63.5%) largely disagreed with the view that men and women must have sex before marriage.

More than 50% of the male and female respondents in each zone held the view that the youth of today are mature enough to make their own decision on being sexually active. This trend was consistently found in all zones (Table Z.6). Once again, there was an average of 13.7% males and 18.6% female who were uncertain of their views, while 18% of the sample did not respond at all.

Table 4.6: Percent distribution of male and female respondents by response to the statement, "Today boys and girls are mature enough to decide about having a sex life"

	North	South	East	West	Mean
Males	61.3	56.8	55.2	57.1	57.6
Agree	15.0	13.4	25.0	18.2	17.9
Disagree	16.1	17.2	5.2	16.3	13.7
Can't say	7.4	12.4	14.7	8.2	10.6

No response					
Females	62.0	51.9	56.2	56.3	56.6
Agree	16.4	12.4	27.8	11.7	17.0
Disagree	17.6	22.9	12.5	21.5	18.6
Can't say	3.7	12.6	3.3	10.3	7.4
No response					

Regardless of whether the respondents were above 20 years (45.5%) or below 20 years (46%), they held a common opinion that today's youth are mature enough to make decisions regarding their sex lives. However, a little more than 30% were not sure of their views and 16.5% did not respond (table not presented).

Although the majority did not favour premarital sexual behaviour, at the same time, they did not view it as a sin (Table 4.7). Among both male and female respondents in each zone, 40% and 33% respectively did not regard premarital sex as a sinful act. However, around 27% maintained traditional views and saw premarital sex as sinful. Again, more than 25% of the male and female respondents in each zone were uncertain about their views regarding premarital sex, and around 18% did not respond at all. Respondents above and below 20 years held similar views.

Table 4.7: Percent distribution of male and female respondents who reported that "It is a sin to have premarital sex"

	North	South	East	West	Mean
Males	23.3	19.2	25.0	25.3	23.2
Agree	44.0	37.1	36.8	41.9	39.9
Disagree	27.2	29.8	27.6	25.0	27.4
Can't say	5.3	13.6	10.5	7.9	9.3
No response					
Females	35.2	27.1	29.1	29.5	30.2
Agree	31.4	30.4	40.4	29.5	32.9
Disagree	26.8	27.1	25.8	33.4	28.2
Can't say	6.5	15.2	4.6	7.5	8.4
No response					

Young boys and girls may not accept premarital sexual behaviour as a personal choice, yet 46% of females on an average felt, that the decision to have premarital sex was solely the concern of the individuals involved and not that of the society (Table 4.8).

Table 4.8: Percent distribution of male and female respondents by response to the statement, "Having premarital sex is the concern of the individual and not society"

All zones	Agree	Disagree	Can't say	No response
Males	46.1	18.1	23.9	16.3
Females	44.1	22.5	21.5	11.6

Thus, the view is that premarital sex is acceptable, if one wishes to indulge in it. About 18.1% of males and 22.5% females, however, felt that premarital sex was definitely the responsibility and concern of society and that one's behaviour would be dictated by its mores and conventions. Once again, around 45% of the respondents were unsure of their views, and around 28% did not respond. These views were consistently found in all the four zones among graduates and undergraduates and irrespective of educational level (table not presented).

A high percentage of both male and female respondents were found to disapprove of sex before marriage, yet their views seemed to alter considerably in the case of couples in love or those officially engaged as can be seen from Tables 4.9 and 4.10. Zonewise responses were more or less uniform.

Table 4.9: Percent distribution of male and female respondents by response to the statement, "A couple in love may have premarital sex"

All zones	Agree	Disagree	Can't say	No response
Males	34.7	31.0	23.5	10.3
Females	12.5	58.9	20.4	8.1

Table 4.10: Percent distribution of male and female respondents by response to the statement, " An officially engaged couple may have premarital sex"

All zones	Agree	Disagree	Can't say	No response
Males	28.6	37.3	26.7	7.2
Females	8.9	61.4	21.5	7.9

In fact, more than twice the number of respondents accepted premarital sex under these conditions as compared to those who accepted it otherwise. Another surprising finding was that acceptance of premarital sex was found to be lower if the couple was officially engaged than if they were just in love. Once again however, there was a substantial number of respondents of both sexes,

particularly females, who disapproved of sex even under such circumstances, and more than 40% could not express a definite opinion (Tables 4.9 and 4.10). To the statement "I may have premarital sex but my marriage partner should not", more males (18%) agreed compared to only 3% of females; 50% of males and 76.5% females disagreed (Table 4.11). Zone-wise responses were more or less uniform.

Table 4.11: Percent distribution of respondents by response to the statement, "I may have premarital sex but my marriage partner should not" by sex and education

All zones	Agree	Disagree	Can't say	No response
<i>Sex</i>	18.1	50.0	19.2	12.4
Males	3.0	76.5	10.8	9.3
Females				
<i>Educational level</i>	7.5	52.6	30.1	9.7
Graduate	11.9	62.1	14.1	11.6
Undergraduate				

These results are indicative of existing double standards, that is, permitting liberal standards of behaviour for males while more conservative standards are applied for females. Also, 7.5% of graduates and 11.9% undergraduates agreed with the statement, while 52.6% and 62.1% respectively disagreed; 30% of the graduates and 14% of undergraduates were uncertain about their views. Thus, education seems to add to the already existing uncertainty. Zonewise responses were more or less uniform.

"A man may have premarital sex but a woman should not" - the responses to this statement revealed a gender difference in that on average, 13.9% of the males and 9.2% of females agreed with it and 59.4% males and 69.7% females disagreed. This further indicates the existing double standards among males in our society. No differences were found in the responses of graduates and undergraduates and those above and below 20 years.

Table 4.12: Percent distribution of male and female respondents by response to the statement, "A man may have premarital sex but a woman should not"

All zones	Agree	Disagree	Can't say	No response
Males	13.9	59.4	16.4	10.0
Females	9.2	69.7	12.5	8.3

Responses to the statement: "I do not mind marrying a man who has had premarital sex", shows that even today, only a small percentage of girls (12.5%) found it acceptable to marry a man who was sexually experienced before marriage, and as many as 60% said they would not (Table 4.13).

Table 4.13: Percent distribution of female respondents who reported "I do not mind marrying a man who has had premarital sex"

Response	North	South	East	West	Mean
Agree	16.4	12.6	12.0	9.1	12.5
Disagree	55.5	55.0	70.2	59.1	59.9
Can't say	22.5	18.5	12.5	22.0	18.8
No response	5.4	13.8	5.3	9.6	8.5

In reality ascertaining whether a man has had sex before marriage is not easy and hence is unlikely to be regarded as an issue. A considerable number did not respond while almost 19% were uncertain of their attitudes.

The male respondents were required to answer the statement "I will only marry a person who has not had sex before marriage". The responses obtained for males were: Agree: 49%; Disagree: 18.4%, Cant say: 19%; while 13% did not respond. The responses given by females on the other hand were: Agree: 45.8%; Disagree: 20.5%; Can't say: 24.5% and 9% did not respond. Thus both males and females especially the latter do not accept premarital sex (Table 4.14). Zone-wise responses were more or less uniform.

Table 4.14: Percent distribution of male and female respondents by response to the statement, "I will marry only a woman/man who has not had sex before marriage"

All zones	Agree	Disagree	Can't say	No response
Males	48.9	18.4	18.9	13.4
Females	45.8	20.5	24.5	9.0

More than half the female respondents in each zone expressed the view that they would approve of their husband's friendship with another women provided it was not a sexual one (Table 4.15). On an average, 14.5% said they would not approve and the views of 35% are not known. Not unexpectedly, a high percentage - 79% - expressed disapproval of a husband's sexual involvement with other women after marriage, while 4.2% said they would accept it. Around

9% were uncertain and 7.6% did not respond (Table 4.15). Zone-wise responses were more or less uniform.

Table 4.15: Percent distribution of female respondents who reported "I will approve of my husband's friendship with a woman only if it does not/even if it involves sex"

Response	North	South	East	West	Mean
Only if it does not involve sex	64.0	54.5	76.8	58.3	63.4
Agree	16.9	17.5	9.2	14.3	14.4
Disagree	13.7	13.1	10.6	15.7	13.2
Can't say	5.2	14.7	9.2	11.6	21.8
No response					
Even if it involves sex	4.6	2.5	5.9	3.1	4.0
Agree	80.9	76.8	78.1	80.0	78.9
Disagree	9.8	9.3	10.6	7.4	9.2
Can't say	4.5	11.2	5.3	9.4	7.6
No response					

One can thus conclude that although the virtue of virginity is still upheld by the majority of boys and girls today, yet there is still a perpetuation of the traditionally more lenient attitude towards a man's sexual excesses, both before and after marriage, especially as regards premarital sex. This leniency is to the extent that some women will put up with such behaviour as though it were inevitable. Thus, while there seems to be a recognition of greater equality between the sexes, there is still a perpetuation of the male legacy of a freer sex life and more liberal sexual attitudes.

Summary

An attempt was made to gauge the sexual attitudes and behaviour of urban youth. The main findings are presented below.

1. More than half of the male respondents preferred a steady boy/girl friend relationship. Female respondents appeared to be more conservative and only a third approved of it. The South and West zone respondents seemed to be more conservative in this regard. Also, those above 20 years of age seemed more open to this idea than their older counterparts. When it came to their younger sister going out with a boy friend, more male (47%) than female (42%) respondents found the idea acceptable.

2. Since it is well known that very few parents take on the responsibility of providing sex education to their children, it can be concluded that films, magazines, books and peers, being easily accessible are the sources of such information for young people. More male compared to female respondents claimed to have knowledge of sexual intercourse. In the East zone a significantly lower number of males claimed awareness compared to females. South zone females were found to be the least knowledgeable. Knowledge of sexual relations did not seem to be influenced by age or educational level.

3. Both male and female respondents were asked to indicate the course of action they would take if their relationship resulted in a pregnancy. On an average 42% of the males said they would marry the girl in question. Other options were to speak to their parents, consult the doctor, leave her to handle the problem or speak to the girl's parents. There were many who did not respond and none of the male respondents said that they would ask her to find an abortion clinic, which is quite contrary to what happens in reality.

In the case of female respondents, a third said they would consult their parents and an equal proportion said they would ask the boy to marry them; a small percentage said they would go to an abortion clinic. In real life however, given the recent figures for abortion among unmarried girls, it is very likely that both males and female would see abortion as the best and safest way out of such a situation.

4. A high percentage of both male (54%) and female (75%) respondents were found to disapprove of sex before marriage. However, both sexes were more likely reconsider it as acceptable if the couple were officially engaged than if they were just in love.

5. In our society sexual relations are regulated through the institution of marriage and hence premarital sex is disapproved and discouraged while the virtue of virginity is upheld. Social and religious sanctions against premarital sex have traditionally been strong deterrents to its practice. The results of the survey reveal an attitude that is not wholly against premarital sexual relations. Yet the fact remains that while many were unable to take a definite stand on this issue, a good number of the young people did not agree with this view. This is probably an indication of considerable uncertainty among the youth in this area of sexual behaviour.

6. More than half of the male and female respondents in each zone held the view that the youth of today are mature enough to make their own decisions on being sexually active or not. Although the majority did not favour premarital sex, yet at

the same time they did not view it as a sin. Once again more than a quarter of the male and female respondents in each zone were uncertain about their views regarding premarital sex. The other opinion was that premarital sex is acceptable if one wishes to indulge in it. This surely shows a changing trend in the youth towards sexual behaviour, and is perhaps reflected in a majority of the respondents agreeing to the statement: "having premarital sex is the concern of the individual and not of society".

7. Responding to the question "A man may have premarital sex but a woman should not" - The results are indicative of existing double standards that is, permitting liberal standards of behaviour for males while more conservative for females. A small percentage of girls (12.5%) found it acceptable to marry a man who was sexually experienced before marriage. To ascertain whether a man has had sex before marriage, is not easy hence the question makes hardly any difference. While the majority of both the respondents have only agreed to marry a person who has not had sex before marriage.

8. The female respondents frankly expressed the view that they would approve of their husband's friendship with a woman only if it does not involve sex, though a few said that their husbands' extramarital relations would not matter. This shows the insecurity and suppression that women go through in our and all that he does as his rights.

9. Uncertainty about views on sexual relationships was noticed throughout as many did not respond to various questions related to this subject, and in some cases education seemed to add to the already existing uncertainty by not knowing whether to choose the existing norm or value or to accept the changing trends.

The traditional values of our family system are still very important and should not be easily given up. However, it is inevitable that certain traditional customs and habits will die out. New models of family life and of relationships among its members are necessary to respond to the needs and expectations of the coming generations. It is important to make them understand the correct Implications of sexuality, marriage and family life, so that they are equipped to make appropriate choices and to harmoniously blend traditional values with modern ones.