

Survey reveals low level of condom consciousness

The study was conducted in six States and is based on interviews of over 51,000 individuals

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NEW DELHI: Less than one in three women know that a condom can be used just once, and just one in six know that a condom cannot disappear into a woman's body.

These are some of the findings of "Youth in India: Situation and Needs," a study carried out by the Indian Institute of Population Sciences and the Population Council, and released here on Saturday.

The findings show that just

46 per cent of young men and 24 per cent of young women were aware that a condom cannot disappear inside a woman's body. Only 31 per cent of young men and 25 per cent of young women felt that condoms do not reduce sexual pleasure.

Marital status affects condom consciousness, with 57 per cent married young men compared to 44 per cent unmarried young men being aware that condoms cannot slip off the man and disappear into a woman's body; the cor-

responding percentages among young women were 29 and 17.

The findings also underscore the limited awareness young people have of most sexual and reproductive matters with only 37 per cent of young men and 45 per cent of young women being aware that a woman could get pregnant in her first sexual encounter, and 19 and 15 per cent respectively of young men and women reporting awareness of sexually transmitted infections other than

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HIV.

Leading sources of information on sexual matters, according to the study, were friends and the media for both young men and women. In contrast, just 10 per cent of young men and women cited teachers and 3-7 per cent cit-

ed health care providers as a source of information; just 2 and 9 per cent of young men and women respectively cited family members.

Teachers and health care providers were relatively infrequently reported as sources of information on

contraception.

The study further points out that only 15 per cent of respondents had attended sex education programmes either in or outside the school setting, notwithstanding the Adolescence Education Programme, the School AIDS Education Programme, the Red Ribbon Clubs and special programmes for out-of-the-school youth.

Speaking on the occasion, Nobel laureate Amartya Sen stressed the need for education on sexual and reproduc-

tive matters. Basic schooling can be central to human security as illiteracy and innumeracy are forms of insecurity themselves, he said.

Significant barrier

When people are illiterate, their ability to understand and invoke their legal rights can be very limited. This can be a significant barrier for illiterate women to make use even of the rather limited rights that they do actually have. Importantly, it can also

muffle the political voice, Prof. Sen said. "The removal of survival disadvantages of women, the reduction of child mortality and moderating influences on fertility rates are all among the basic issues involved in removing the "downside risks" that threaten life and dignity," he said.

The study was carried out in Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu in 2006-07, and is based on interviews of over 51,000 individuals.