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Development, Knowledge and Perception of Sexuality among Arab Youth

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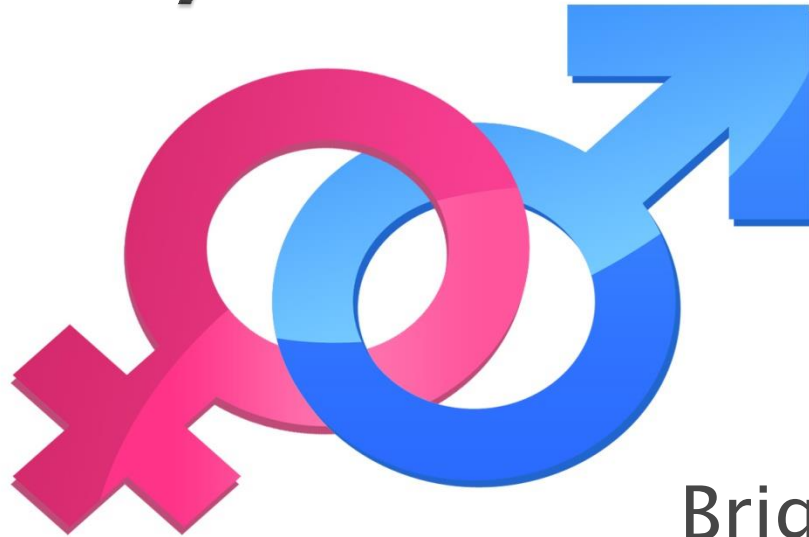
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Reproductive Health and Sexuality in Arab Youth



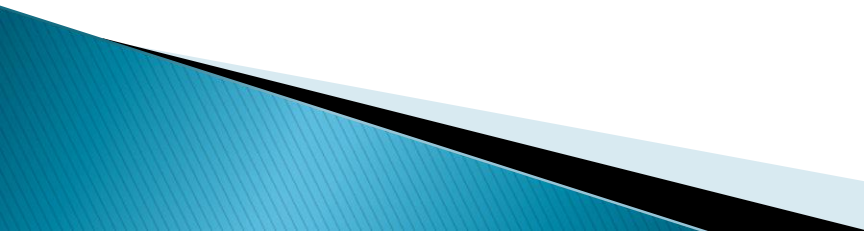
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Outline

- ▶ Introduction
- ▶ Method of administration
- ▶ The questionnaire
- ▶ Institutional Review Board
- ▶ Preparation process
- ▶ Sample
- ▶ Results
- ▶ Discussion



Background of the Study

- ▶ Issam Fares Institute's interest in youth issues including sexuality.
 - ▶ Based it on a similar study conducted in 2004 but covering only two samples from Lebanese universities.
 - ▶ Improved questionnaire, added section on use of internet
 - ▶ Changed methodology for data collection
 - ▶ Expanded it to a regional study
- 

Methodology considered:

- ▶ Hard copy distribution on university campuses
 - Tough because of sensitivity of topic and administrative red tape
 - High costs of data collection agency
- ▶ Soft copy distribution via mass emailing university students
 - Administrative red tape still exists



Consultations

- ▶ PI travelled and consulted different academicians & youth in the Arab region such as UAE, Jordan, Qatar.
 - Everyone supported the study
 - Everyone agreed that institutions would not consent to having the study circulate on their campuses
 - Solution as suggested by youth and academicians: INTERNET
 - Which language to use? English of course.
 - As a young woman said: “we don’t talk about such things in Arabic!”

Methodology Used

- ▶ Online surveying is a very powerful tool
- ▶ Supported as the optimal tool for administering questionnaires of a sensitive nature
- ▶ Provides complete privacy and confidentiality
- ▶ Usually leads to a high response rate
- ▶ Intended to publish the questionnaire on Arab forums and university Facebook student groups



Method of administration

- ▶ Lime Survey
 - Free Web application hosted by AUB
 - User-friendly
 - Allows for the development and publishing of surveys and the collection of responses
 - Answers are immediately transcribed into SPSS format to run stats.



Method of administration

- ▶ Conducted a content analysis of online Arab forums and decided on a number of them based on their topics.
- ▶ Most of the sought out forums did not post the study advertisement on their pages.
Reasons: – website is offline
– not responsive
– did not approve of study's topic
– too expensive to post the ad
- ▶ Finally, 3 forums posted the ad: Mideast Youth, Trance Hits, and Nasawiya.



Method of administration

- ▶ Ran a search on the largest student groups on Facebook for Jordan, UAE, Egypt, and Lebanon. Chose the 2 largest groups from each country to contact.
- ▶ Sent a uniform email to Facebook group administrators inviting them to participate in the study and spread the ad to their members.
- ▶ A minority of the emailed Facebook group administrators forwarded the ad, despite multiple follow-up emails.



The Questionnaire



- ▶ Included 159 questions
- ▶ In this study, a new section “sex and the internet” was added
- ▶ Goodson et al.’s (2000) scale examining sex and the internet was slightly modified
- ▶ Special attention was paid to the wording of the questions. It was important to ask the sensitive questions and it was also important not to offend or somehow negatively affect someone by the questions.

The Questionnaire



- ▶ Informed consent
- ▶ Reproductive health and sexual education
- ▶ Masturbation
- ▶ Virginitv
- ▶ Sexual experiences and relationships
- ▶ Marriage
- ▶ Sex and the internet
- ▶ Demographics
- ▶ Comments

The Questionnaire



- ▶ 2 versions of the study
 - Male
 - Female
- ▶ Some gender specific questions:
 - Males: visiting a prostitute in the “sexual experiences & relationships” section
 - Females: told their husbands about their previous sexual experiences in the “marriage”
- ▶ Study was interactive, in the sense that it would skip inapplicable sections based on the responses of the participants.

The Questionnaire



- ▶ Study was restricted to those 18 years of age and over. Marking one's age as less than 18 would lead to the automatic termination of participation
- ▶ Prohibited multiple participations by the same respondent through Lime Survey.

Institutional Review Board

- ▶ Securing IRB approval was a lengthy process.
 - Sensitivity of topic
 - Novelty of methodology in Arab world
- ▶ Originally applied for expedited review but received a full board review.
- ▶ Informed consent was long and comprehensive covering all the points necessary to judge whether to participate or not.
- ▶ Launching the study was delayed due to
 - IRB review process
 - Month of Ramadan, Eid al Fitr and Eid al Adha



Preparation Process

- ▶ First, the survey items were decided upon after consultations with experts in the field.
- ▶ Second, the survey was peer reviewed and then corrected as per their comments.
 - For example: reformatted introductory lengthy table into separate questions.



Preparation Process

- ▶ Third, survey was piloted on Nasawiya's group on Facebook.
 - This step was encouraging because of the immediate participation by the members.
- ▶ Fourth, study was launched at a wide spectrum, reaching out to all the decided upon forums and Facebook groups.
- ▶ Remarkable turnout: 100+ participants / 2 days.



Sample



- ▶ 424 persons tried to participate in the study.
- ▶ 330 were included; others were either below 18 years or did not give consent.
- ▶ Aim was to collect 800 participants, 200 from each country
- ▶ The desired number was not attained for a variety of reasons:
 - A lot of Facebook university group administrators did not forward the ad we sent with the active link, despite multiple follow-up emails.
 - Most forums were uncooperative too
 - The political instability in the Arab region affected the response rate. Participation became a low priority when compared to what was occurring in the Arab world.



Results

Demographics

- ▶ Males 54.24%
- ▶ Females 45.76%
- ▶ 70% age range 18–25 years
- ▶ Overwhelming majority (79%) reported Lebanon as their country of residence.
- ▶ Overwhelming majority (86%) reported Lebanon as their country of origin.
- ▶ Other countries that participated were Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Palestine, Qatar, KSA, Syria, UAE, Algeria, & Morocco.



Demographics

- ▶ Education status
 - Almost half (49%) the participants hold a bachelor degree and 46% have a MA+ degree
- ▶ Marital status
 - Almost half of respondents reported being single, then 34% reported being in a relationship



Sexual Education: Females

- ▶ Mothers were the sources of information on menstruation & pregnancy & delivery.
- ▶ Peers were the source of information on sexual intercourse, & how far to go on a date.
- ▶ The media was the most common source, to learn about STIs, their prevention, & where to go for help, HIV/AIDS, abortion, & homosexuality.
- ▶ Internet was useful to learn about orgasms.

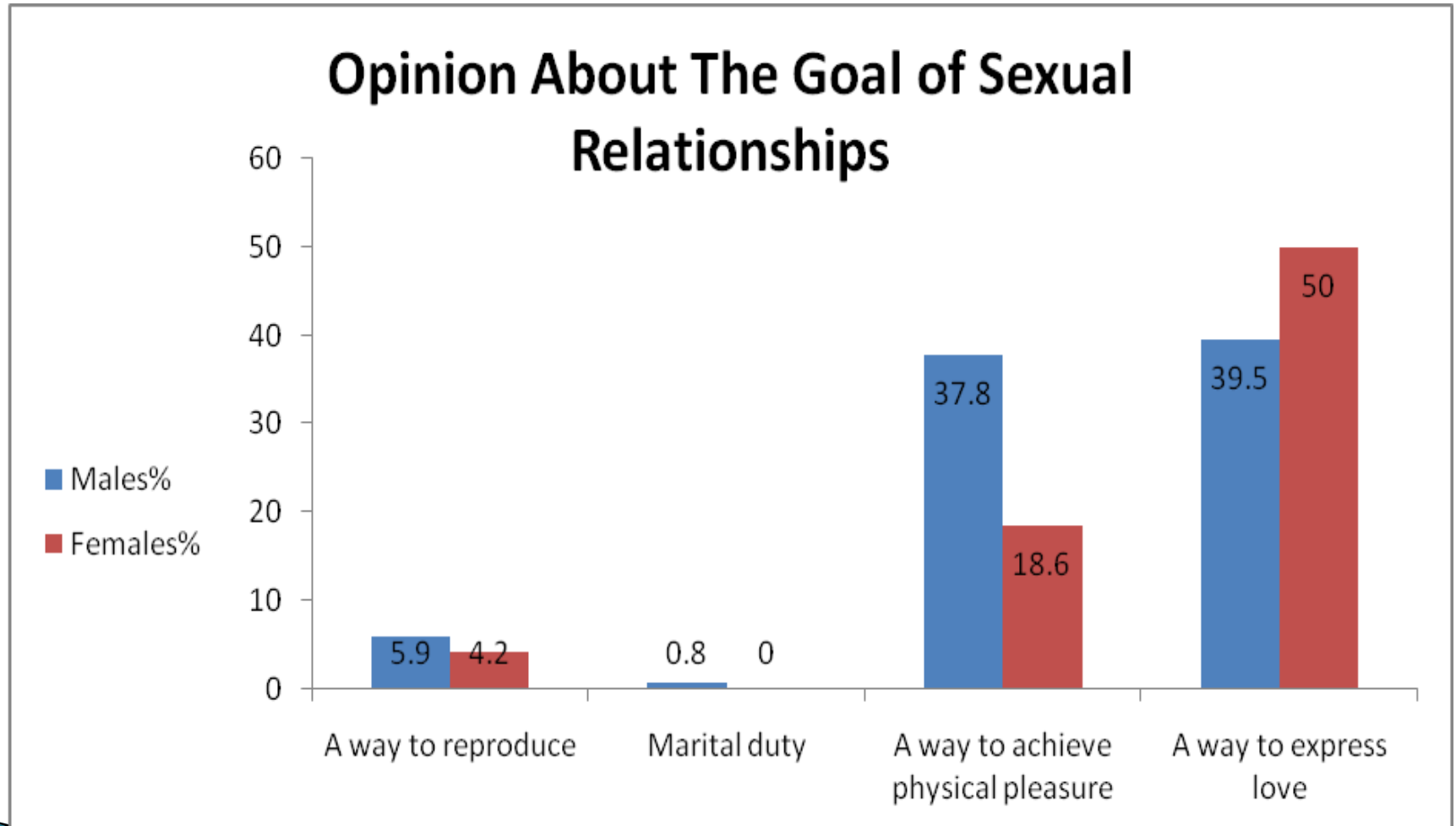


Sexual Education: Males

- ▶ School was the source of information about menstruation, pregnancy & delivery, birth control, & STIs.
- ▶ Sexual intercourse, prevention of STIs, where to seek help for STIs, HIV/AIDS, abortion, orgasm, & homosexuality were looked for on the internet.
- ▶ Peers were the source of information on how far to go on a date (the more practical aspect).



Goal of Sexual Relationship



Masturbation

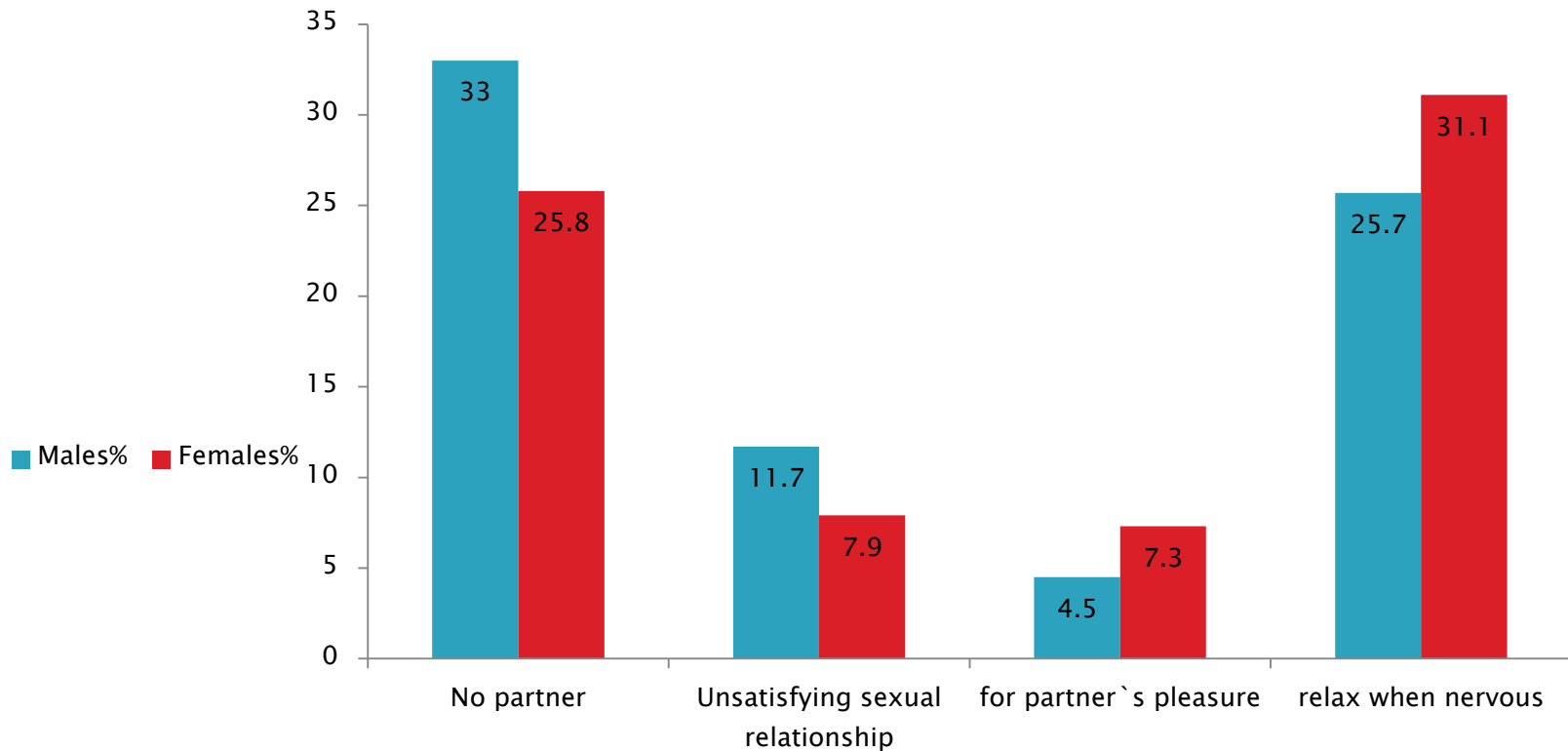


- ▶ 98% of males and 86% of females reported that they have previously masturbated.
- ▶ Approximately 48% of participants started masturbating at the age of 12–14, & 20% between 15–17 years.

Why do they Masturbate?

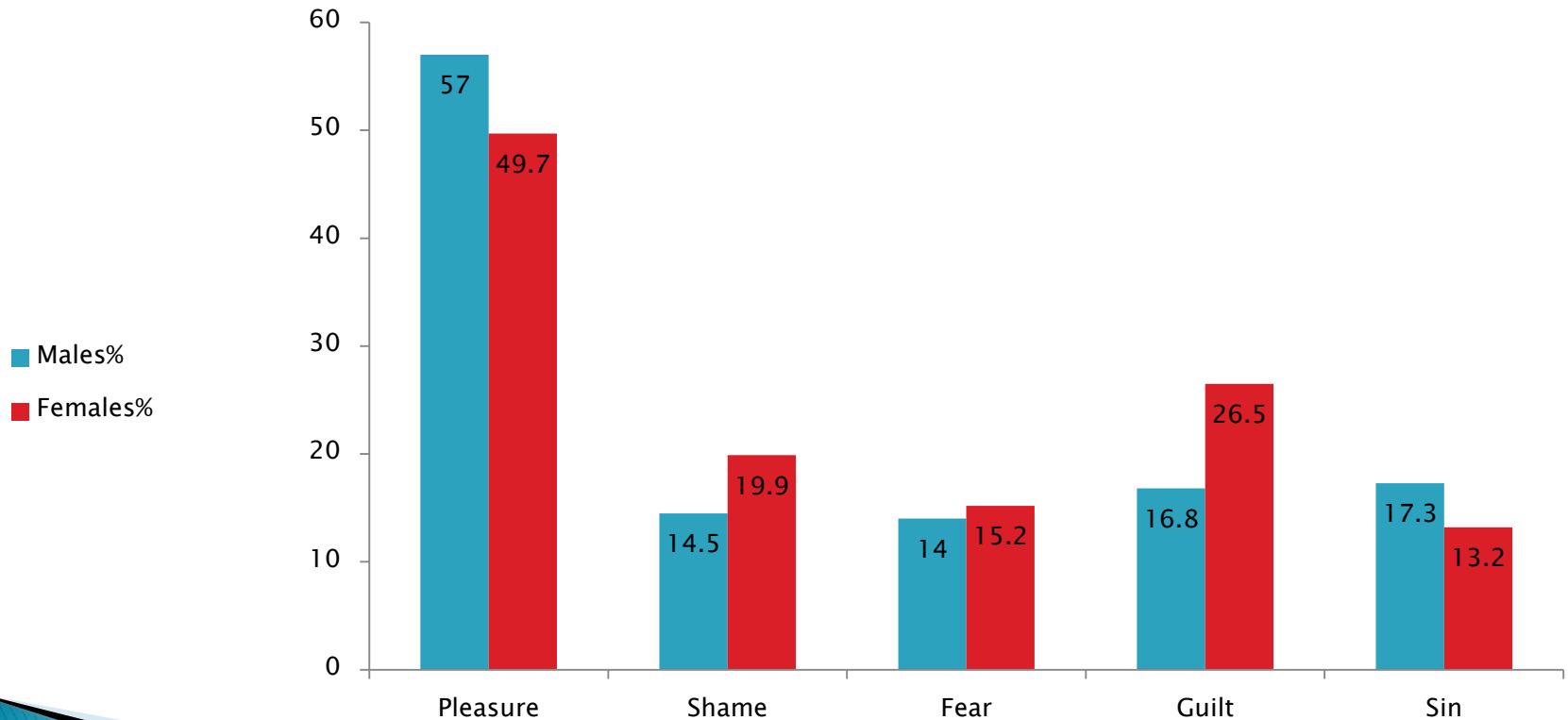


Over 18 and masturbate, why?



Feelings about Masturbation

What did you feel while you were engaging in this practice?



Myths about Masturbation



- ▶ Around 46% of males & 34% of females said that they heard it can become a bad habit.
- ▶ Around 22% of males & 30% of females said that it can lead to dissatisfaction in sexual relationships.
- ▶ Around 24% of males and 18% of females said that it can make you sexually cold/unresponsive.

Virginity: What is it?



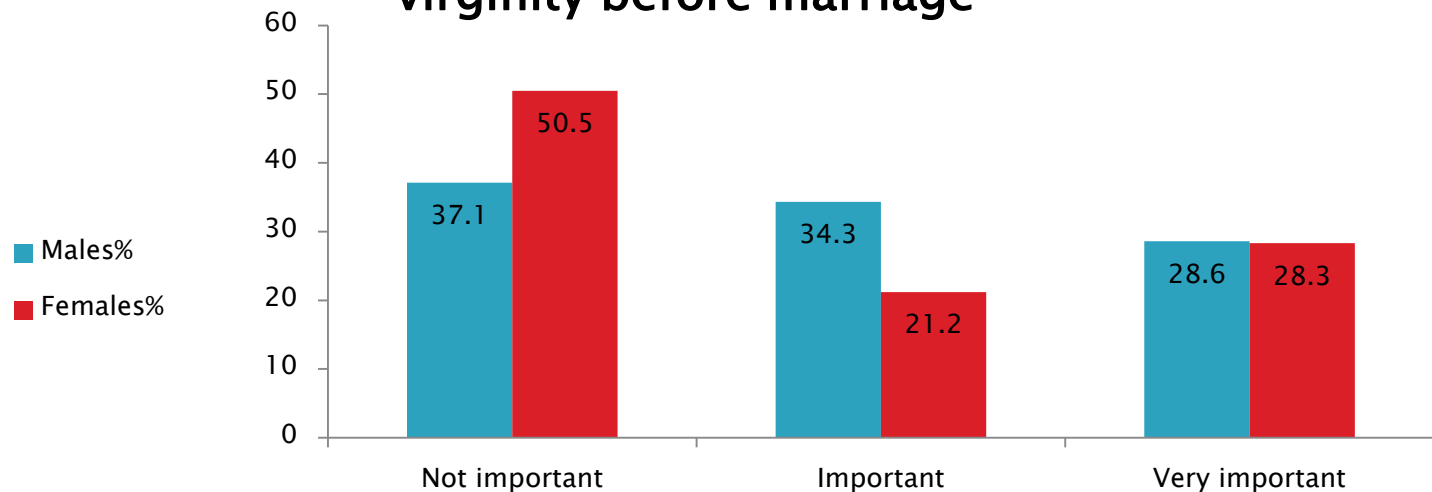
- ▶ Around 56% of females & 50% of males said that it's a membrane that breaks at the first sexual intercourse.
- ▶ Around 20% of females and 17% of males said that it's a present saved for the beloved.

Virginity: Importance



- ▶ Around 51% of females said it is **not important** compared to 37% of males

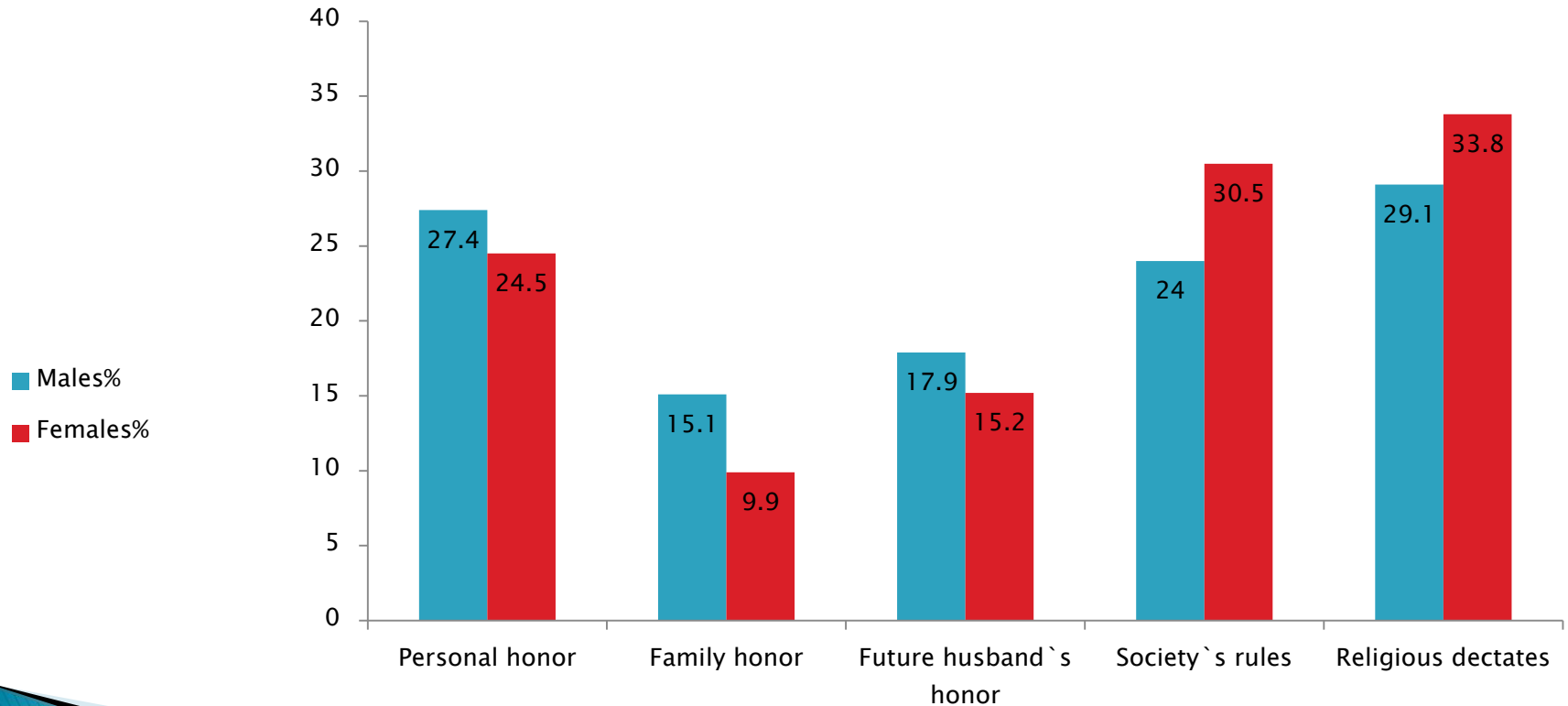
How important is it for a female to keep her virginity before marriage



Why is Virginity Important?



Why is it very important that a female keeps her virginity before marriage?



Single and Virgin?

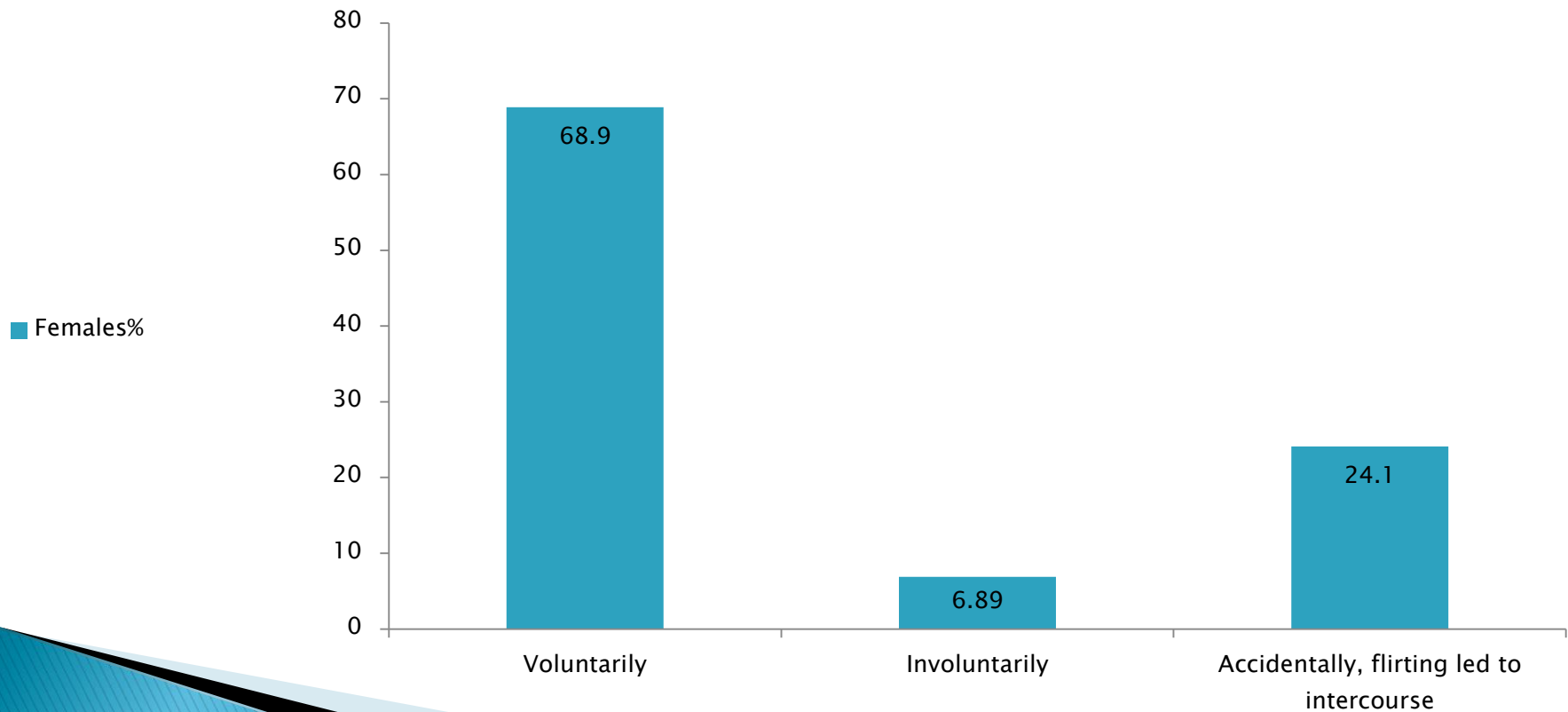


- ▶ 33% of single females answered that they are no longer virgins, with 67% claiming that they are.
- ▶ The main reasons for remaining a virgin are saving it for the future husband (85%) followed by not wanting a sexual relationship (47%).

How did you lose your Virginit



If you are not a virgin, how did you lose your virginity?



Men: Would you marry a non-virgin?



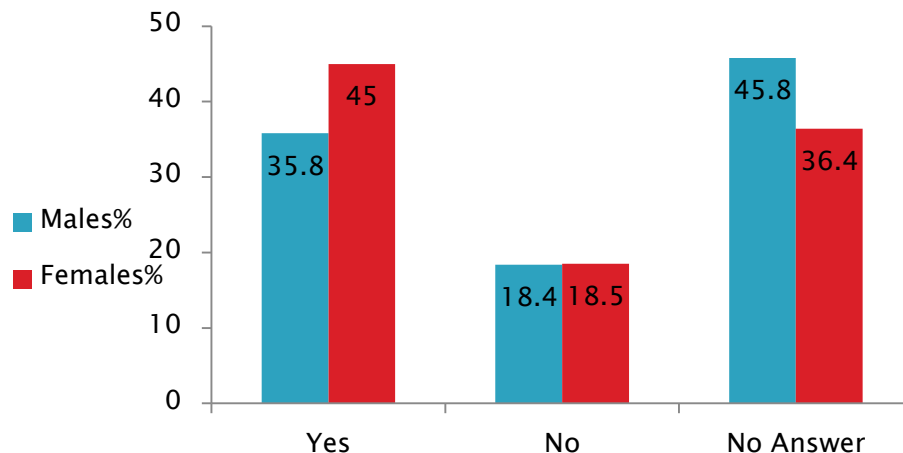
- ▶ 76% of males would marry a non-virgin.
- ▶ If males found out later that their wife was not a virgin,
 - 50% would want more details
 - 27% would be understanding
 - 5% would be upset
 - 1.2% would physically hurt her



Sexual Experiences

- ▶ Around 36% of males and 45% of females said that they are sexually active.
- ▶ Around 18% of males and 19% of females said that they are not sexually active.
- ▶ The rest gave no answer.

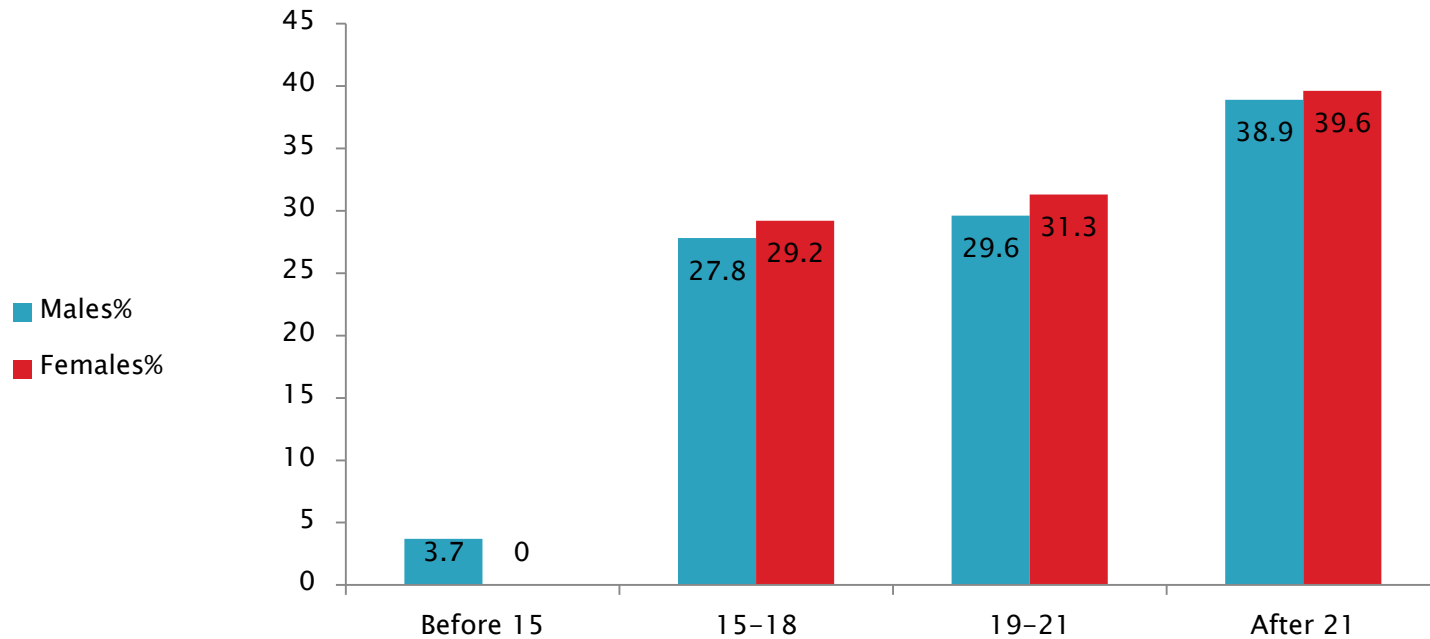
Are you sexually active?





Sexual experiences & relationships

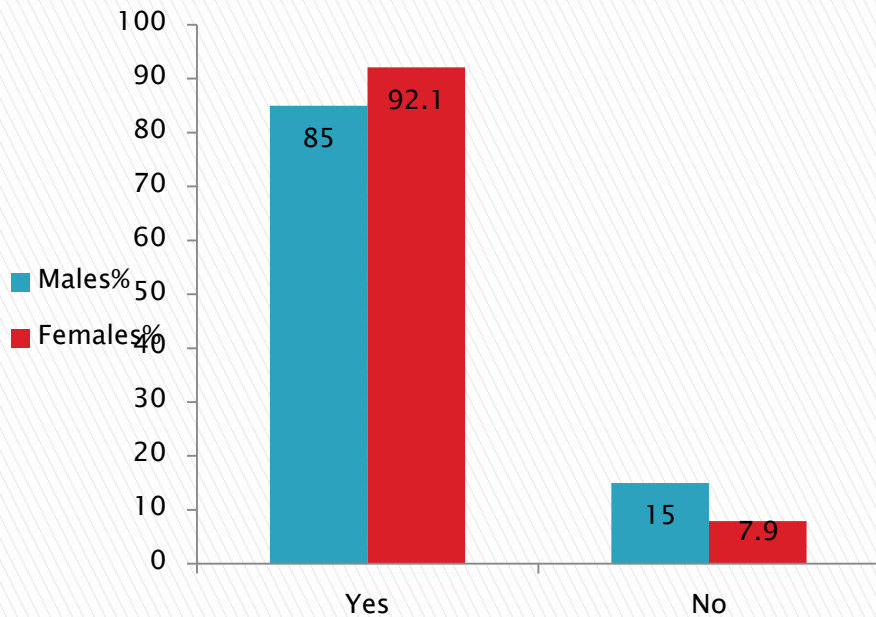
At which age did you have your first sexual relationship with penetration?



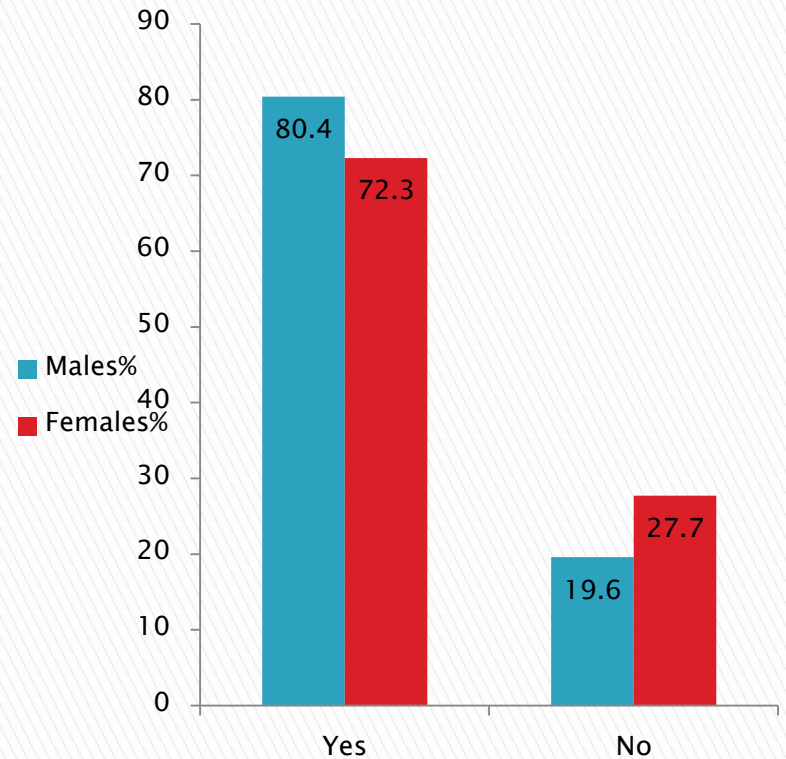


Sexual Experiences and Pleasure

Does your partner provide you with the type of stimulation that gives you pleasure?



If your partner doesn't, do you ask for it?





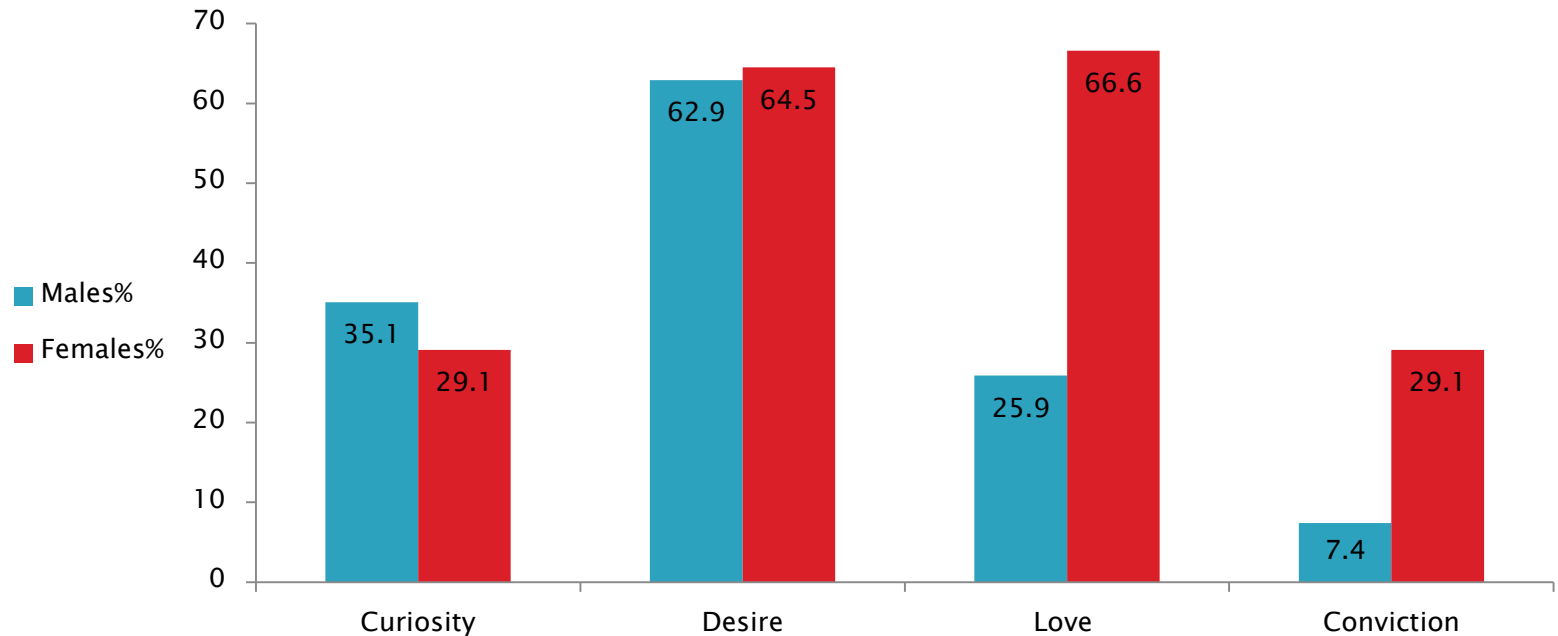
Sexual Experiences and Orgasm

- ▶ 69% of females have faked an orgasm.
- ▶ 42% of those who do, fake it to pleasure their partner.
- ▶ 33% fake it to preserve their partner's manhood/virility.
- ▶ 18% fake it so they would get it over with



Reasons behind sexual relationships

Why did you have this first sexual relationship?



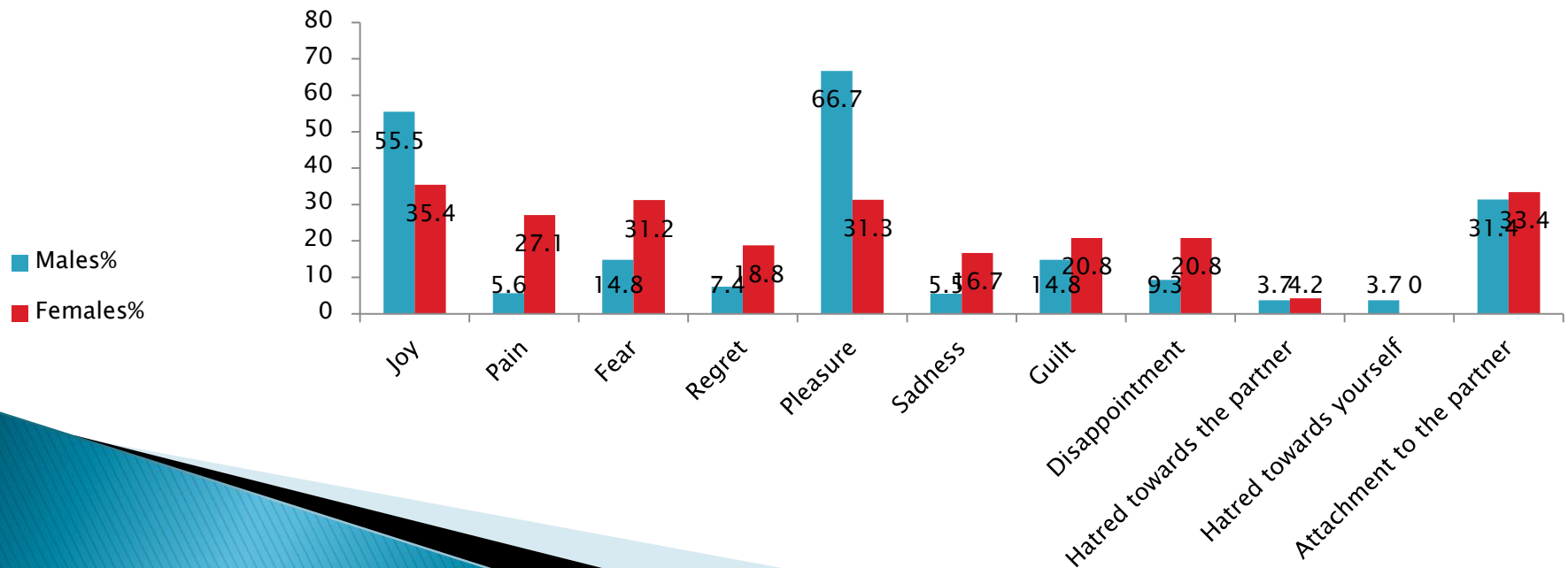
Note the discrepancy in love between genders



Emotions and Sexuality

- ▶ After first sexual intercourse joy, pleasure, & attachment was felt the most by both genders.
- ▶ Women have more negative emotions

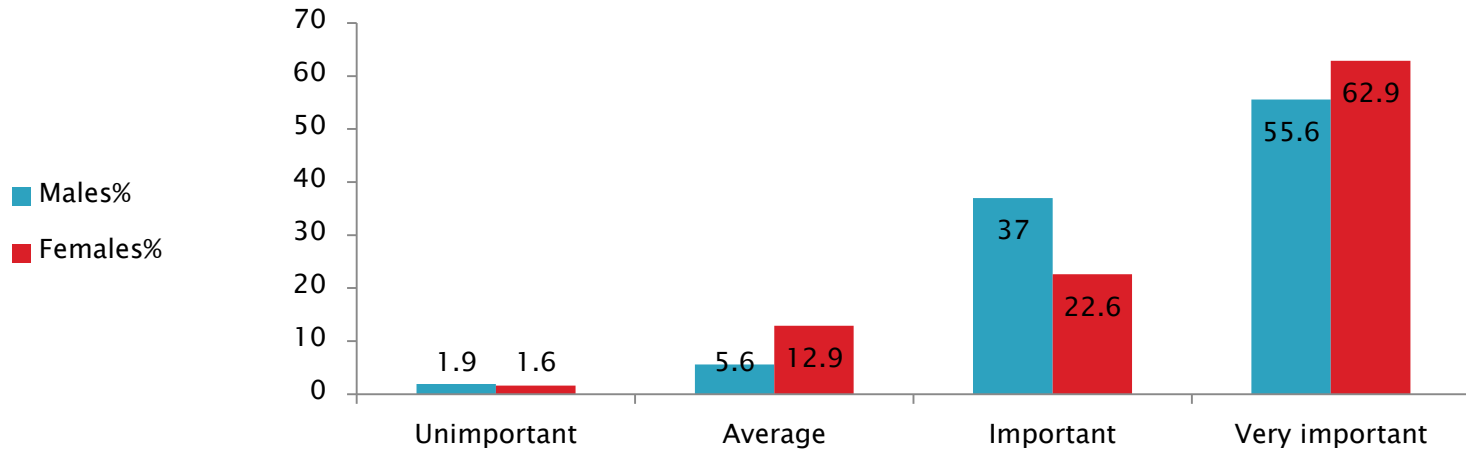
Reaction after the first sexual intercourse and loss of virginity





Importance of Sexuality

How important is sex in your life as a couple?



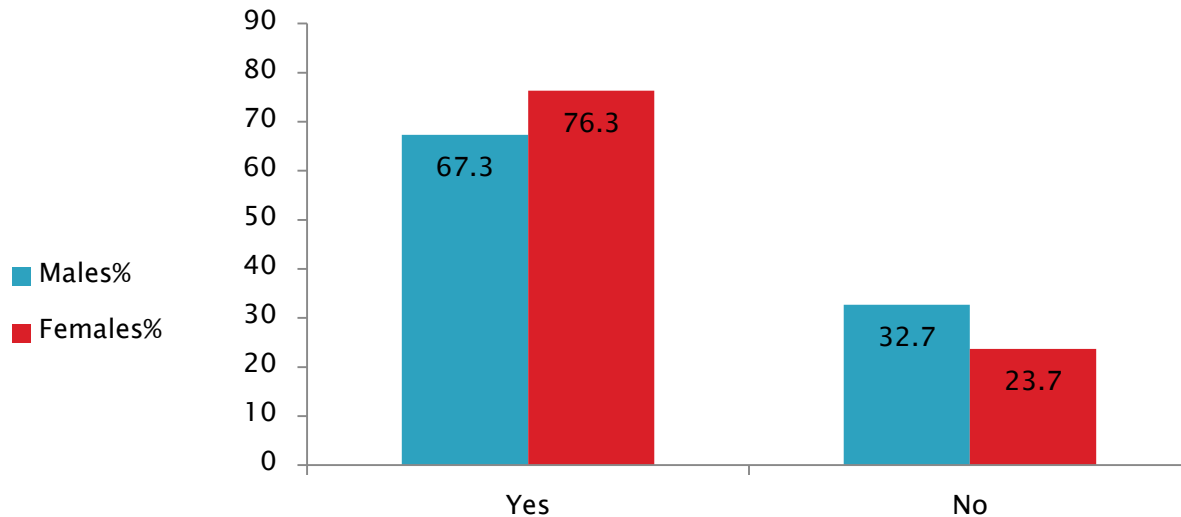
- ▶ 72% of males & 67% of females don't have sex as much as they like, mostly because of a lack of a regular partner or him/her being away.



Satisfaction Level

- ▶ Around 76% of females and 67% of males are generally satisfied with their sexual lives.

Generally do you feel satisfied with your sexual life?



Marriage



- ▶ 8 males (4.5%) & 14 females (9%) have ever been married.
- ▶ All the females said that they made the decision in choosing their husbands.
- ▶ 5/6 males decided in choosing their wives.
- ▶ Around 43% of male & females said that they had full sexual intercourse with their partners before marriage.
- ▶ Around 57% of females said that they were virgins when they got married.

Sex and the Internet



- ▶ Around 59% of the males & 56% of the females said that they discuss sexuality related issues with their friends online.
- ▶ Half of the males & females say things online that they wouldn't disclose in person.
- ▶ Around 58% of males & 59% of females said that they have met in person people they first met online.

Cyber Relationships



- ▶ Over half of the participants are currently in a real world relationship.
- ▶ ~ 63 % of the participants' partners know about the friends/romantic relationships they have online.
- ▶ Almost half of the males & females' partners have expressed jealousy over their online developed friendships or romantic relationships.



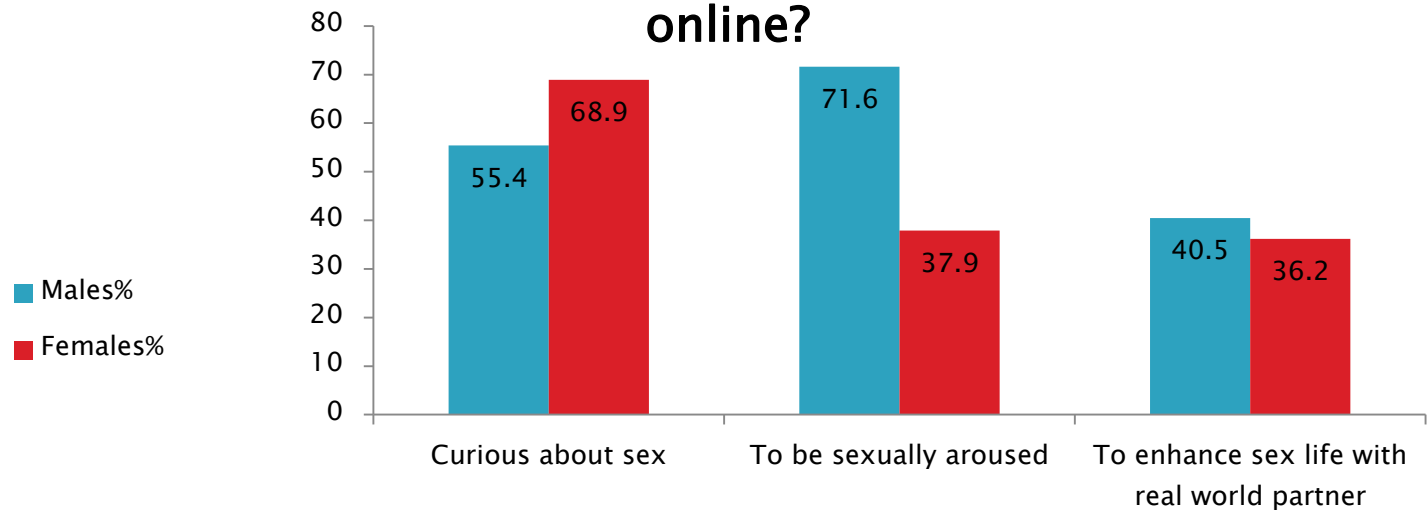
- ▶ Around 57% of males & 43% of females believe that people can develop meaningful romantic relationships online.
- ▶ Around 62% of males & 57% of females believe that internet can provide a way of developing emotionally supportive relationships.

Sex and Internet



- ▶ Around 86% of males & 67% of females said that they access sexually explicit materials on the internet.

Why do you access sexually explicit material online?



Sex and the Internet



- ▶ Around 73% of males & 44% of females like to view other types of sexually explicit materials such as adult video tapes/DVDs.
- ▶ Around 74% of males masturbate while viewing sexually explicit websites compared to 45% of females.
- ▶ Around 29% of males & 21% of females said that they have cyber sex with an online partner.



- ▶ Around 30% of males & 25% of females said that the internet is important for them to learn new sexual techniques.
- ▶ Around 19% of males & 23% of females said that it helps them improve their sexual relationship in the real world.
- ▶ Around 28% of males & 29% of females said it helps them to satisfy their curiosity about sex.



- ▶ Around 13% of males & 5% of females said that cyber–sex can provide them with the emotional connectedness that is found in real–life sex.
- ▶ Around 65% of males & 68% of females believe virginity is maintained post cyber–sex.
- ▶ Around 29% of males and 26% of females said that cyber–sex is an alternative way to practice “safer sex” (emotionally and/or socially).

Where are Arab Youth in their Sexuality?



- ▶ Women relate sexuality to love, relationships, romance. Men are more practical, but not necessarily more adventurous.
- ▶ Societal values play a major role for all of them in their sexual development, but more limiting with women.
- ▶ Feelings of guilt, shame and sin are still accompanied with any sexual act.

Family and Religion



- ▶ Family and religion are the pillars of the Arab society.
- ▶ Religion condemns pre-marital sexuality for women and men.
- ▶ Family and society allow it for men.
- ▶ Virginity highly valued as a pre-existing condition in marriage for women (and a good reputation). Yet women are overcoming it (33% in our sample).

Sexuality and Identity



- ▶ An important part of the identity development is the sexual development.
- ▶ It lags behind in the Arab region and creates a big gap as individuals mature cognitively and socially, and are hindered emotionally and sexually.
- ▶ The sexual (and often emotional) identity is expected to develop fully in marriage: this is the rite of passage for coming of age in Lebanon.

Sexuality and Marriage



- ▶ Myths, expectations, lack of experience and lack of communication are major problems in the sexual relationship within marriage: clinical observations.
- ▶ Pressures on both to fulfill an expected sexual role and still find a way to reach an orgasm create stress and conflict in the relationship.

Conclusions



- ▶ Youth are getting more liberal with their ideas and some practices with the help of the internet
- ▶ Influence of religion, family values and society is still omnipresent.
- ▶ Sexual education is far from complete and needs inclusion in curriculums in schools and with parents.
- ▶ Most important is to have a balance between sexual explorations, maturity and bearing of responsibility: the internet does not teach that, parents do.



Female: 2014-2015
Male: 2014-2015
www.igmp.org

Thank You!

