

Census shows new trends in marriages

KNOTTY AFFAIR

SHARE OF PERSONS ACCORDING TO AGE AT MARRIAGE (%)

When married (yrs ago)	MEN			WOMEN		
	Before age 18 yrs	18-25 yrs	Over 26 yrs age	Before age 18 yrs	18-25 yrs	Over 26 yrs age
0-4	3	66	32	17	75	7
20-29	7	71	22	32	64	3
>40	16	72	12	50	49	1

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New Delhi: Far-reaching changes seem to be occurring in the way marriages are fixed in India, and one of these is the age at which marriages take place. About one-third of all married women in the country tied the knot before turning 18. Among men, this proportion was much smaller at just 6%. But, the overwhelming majority of women got married by the time they were 25, revealing social pressures — and perhaps lack of employment — still at work.

These and related findings, including a rising trend of men and women not marrying at all, emerge from the recently released Census 2011 data on marriage.

Among those married up to four years prior to 2011, around 17% of women and just 3% men were below 18 years of age at the time of marriage. To compare this with the past, we can look at the age at marriage of people married 20 or 30 or even 40 years ago. Among such middle aged and

elderly persons, 50% of women and 16% of men reported getting married before they were 18.

So are people marrying later? Yes and no. Clearly, much less people are marrying before the legally permitted ages of 18 years for women and 21 years for men, compared to earlier.

But here's another fact: 92% of women were married by the time they reached 25 years of age. This was the case among those married up to four years before the Census in 2011. Among women married for 20 to 29 years, a huge 96% had got married by the time they reached the age of 25.

For men, the situation was different earlier, and it has changed even more in recent years. Among men married in the past four years, nearly one-third tied the knot after they had reached 26. Between 20 and 30 years ago, the proportion of such men was 22%. Forty years ago, 12% men married after age 26.

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