

CONSULTATION WITH YOUNG PEOPLE ON SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH ISSUES FOR YOUNG MEN

INTRODUCTION

The overall aim of this project is to meet with young people to gather their views on sexual and reproductive issues for young men.

This project also aims to evaluate how well current sexual and reproductive health strategies are working for young men. It entails gathering information about the learning processes young men are, or have been, involved in in this area and their knowledge, awareness, use and experience of using sexual health services and educative processes.

The project also seeks to gain ideas and explore options for initiatives that can better meet young men's needs and improve all young people's sexual and reproductive health.

Organisations who work directly with young people were contacted and a request made for young people to be involved in this consultation process.

A letter to the organisations concerned followed, outlining the project more fully and young people were offered the opportunity to be involved. Involvement in this process was totally voluntary, written consent was asked for and the participants could finish the session at any time.

The introductory letter to young people, the consent form and the participants' feedback are enclosed in the appendix.

In addition, information about services was provided as well as a small gift as a token of appreciation.

Thirty young men were consulted in individual sessions. In addition three small focus groups for young men, and two with young women, took place. Full demographic details of the young people involved are detailed in the section following titled 'Baseline Data'.

The topic areas served as the focus and the team members reframed the questions as necessary to ensure the participants understood them.

BASELINE DATA

All baseline data regarding ethnicity and age group breakdown as well as sexual orientation was noted in the information process separately from each interview and then collated together to form the baseline data.

Thirty young men participated in individual sessions. Additionally there were three focus groups of young men and two focus groups with young women.

The sessions were facilitated by experienced youth workers who are used to working with young people in individual and group sessions. In addition to the following data, the participants provided feedback about being involved in the consultations which is detailed in the appendix.

All sessions, both group and individual were audio-taped. Some participants in the sessions chose to record their own written information. The facilitator also made notes when they were seen as useful additions.

The team that was involved is included in appendix. Two Youthline team members, one male and one female were contracted to process the data and produce the analysis. Both have relevant qualifications in this area. They analysed the data looking at the comments, how frequently issues were mentioned and linking themes. In addition, the facilitators were interviewed to draw upon their assessments of the interview processes.

The information was collated into hard copy data and backed up by specific material from the audio-tapes and notes from the individual sessions.

CAVEAT:

The researchers acknowledge their contribution to this report. This is a story gathered from information collected by several experienced youth workers, tied into a story by another, reflecting in the end both the voices of those who answered these questions, the presence of those who asked them, and the subjective, but culturally attuned intuition of a writers.

It is important to note that this report is the views of the young people who were interviewed in this project.

At all times Youthline sought to report on these views with accuracy. However, the numbers of participants interviewed does mean that the data does not necessarily represent the wider youth population, and should be seen more as indicative of the thoughts and feeling of youth in our community today. As a narrative description of the views of the young people involved, this document goes a long way to giving relevant and valuable information to assist in policy-making decisions.

OPENING FOCUS: WANTS AND WORRIES

WHAT DO YOUNG MEN WISH FOR, HOPE FOR AND WANT IN THE AREA OF SEX, SEXUALITY, SEXUAL HEALTH, AND RELATIONSHIPS?

Young Men are Seeking a Partner, and Intimacy

The rewards and joys which human relationships make possible would appear to mean at least as much to young men as the excitement of sex. More than anything else, and with very little variation between the different age groups, young men say that they are looking for:

- A Relationship
- Deep emotional connection, love and intimacy
- Moral virtue
- Companionship

Typically all of these themes are interwoven, and not easily separable. A very strong interest in relationships is however the highest priority. Relationships are talked about as a goal, something which happens over the long term, is meaningful, and provides stability, companionship, friendship, and sex. For a small group of men this is equated to settling down, getting married and having children.

*“I want in relationships...meaningful, meaningful relationships.
Things you can learn from.”* (Maori, 19-20)

“Someone to love I suppose, to get close to, build a relationship.” (Indian, 17-18)

Related to the theme of relationships, is an interest in emotional experiences, most importantly love, and the sense of being able to care for another person. The intimacy that this generates is frequently considered to involve a complete openness of communication, a willingness to accept and share every experience. It brings happiness - and like relationships - it may involve sex.

*“Someone they can always talk to and always rely on that they’ll be there in hard times
and just every day sort of thing,”* (Pakeha, 17-18)

*“I find the relationship is the goal and the sex is just an extra item ...
which makes it more intimate and more real.”* (Pakeha, 19-20)

Lower on the priority list the moral virtues in their relationships, especially of their partners, are talked about as well. The moral qualities that are considered to be important to young men are things like respect, honesty, faithfulness and trust:

*“Just want, like, good girlfriends, good personality, treat you well
and, like, wont muck you around or cheat on you or anything.”* (Maori, 15-16)

The sense of having a companion rates similar mention to the importance of moral virtue. Getting along with somebody, friendship, sharing time and conversation together, are all valued. The young man who talked about wanting “*to understand girls*” (Pakeha, 19-20), expressed perhaps a desire which links this more social level of contact to the deeper realms of intimacy, morality and relationships. Young men fully realize that complexity can arise at any level of a relationship. And for some men, at least, it is “*difficult to have no emotional involvement*” (Focus group)

Sex is the Next Biggest Issue

The desire that young men have for sex is very powerful, and as an issue it merits a significance for them that is almost equal to that achieved by relationships. There is a clear priority in the concerns that young men have related to sex. They want:

- Sexual pleasure: really great sex!
- Safe sex, freedom from STDs and STIs
- Education about sex
- Knowledge in the use of condoms, and avoidance of pregnancy

Sex is generally talked about separately from relationships and feelings. In terms of its quality it appears to be seen as an end in itself, sometimes preferable to a relationship. Moreover it may be considered to be something which is best experienced with a variety of partners. And for one man at least, it is best to:

“get the sex drive out of your system before you settle down.” (Pakeha, 17-18)

“I mean she’s the one that’s got to give birth and take care of the baby.” (Indian, 17-18)

“What I eventually want is a long-term relationship, but along the way, I guess you have sex with other people or people consensually that it is just sex.” (Pakeha, 17-18)

Aside from the primacy of importance attached to having really great sex, young men are also highly concerned about safety, and the avoidance of contracting disease when having sex. A reasonable sized group of men specifically wanted more education and information about issues concerning sexual health.

“Need free information I think – you can never have too much” (Pakeha, 15-16)

Very few men spoke of wanting easier access to condoms, although when the issue was raised in one group, the general consensus was that it’s a really bad idea not to wear one when having sex. Direct concern about the possibility of getting a woman pregnant was fairly limited, and only a few men spoke about not wanting to cause a pregnancy.

“Some used to think it was pretty cool to have sex without a condom for enjoyment and it was great to get your girlfriend on the pill, but people still thought you were crazy and to still wear condoms.” (Pakeha, 19-20)

One extra issue concerning sex which was raised in the context of discussion about hopes and desires, was the feeling :

“All their friends might be doing it and it’s just sort of peer pressure.” (Pakeha, 17-18)

It was felt by a number of men that they are subject to forms of competition that make sexual activity necessary if they are to be perceived as masculine and cool.

“It was almost like a pride thing to try to loose your virginity as soon as possible. I found all my friends tried to project this image of strong sort of heterosexuality and at an all-guys school it generally makes them feel more secure – compensate by being extra masculine.” (Pakeha, 19-20)

Other Hopes and Wishes

In discussing what they wanted, it was mentioned by a few of the gay men that being gay is not really accepted:

“I want more acceptance, more visibility basically in the wider community.” (Maori, 19-20)

A small number of comments were recorded from men who expressed a desire to have a female partner who is:

- Physically attractive
- Intelligent
- Rich
- Not too emotionally demanding

WHAT ARE YOUNG MEN’S CONCERNS, WORRIES, AND FEARS IN THE AREA OF SEX, SEXUALITY, SEXUAL HEALTH, AND RELATIONSHIPS?

STIs and Pregnancy are the Number One Fear

Almost half of the comments regarding concerns and fears revolve around the possibility of being exposed to an STI. Generally speaking specific diseases were not mentioned, although AIDS did receive some minor comment.

“I think fear in the area of sex would be more like STIs and HIV and AIDS. They’re still really prevalent.” (Maori, 19-20)

“Worry more that their partner’s safe, you know, whether they’ve been sexually active before and just the tests and things for that.” (Pakeha, 15-16)

The fear of getting a woman pregnant rated only about a third as many mentions as the fear of STIs.

“I guess the general desire not to impregnate, cause a pregnancy while they are practicing their sexuality.” (Pakeha, 19-20)

Feelings and Relationships are a Minefield

Other topics covered in the discussion of fears and concerns, reveal the enormous variety of personal and emotional problems which can arise in intimate and sexual encounters. From this vast field of worry, a number of primary concerns emerge as major themes of the discussion. Right across the different age groups these issues are as much of a problem to young men as the fear of getting an STI:

- Breaking up a relationship
- Feeling inadequate, insufficiently confident, inexperienced, and unable to perform
- Being rejected, not accepted, and feeling ashamed for that
- Needing the freedom to develop a healthy sexual identity

The break up of a relationship is deeply painful to a young man. It involves either the question of how to initiate a split, and the concurrent fear of hurting somebody:

“I always find lots of people talking about breakups of their relationships, they don’t know what to do, they don’t know how to do it, what do I say “Look it’s just bad timing” or “Can we just be friends?” kind of stuff?” (Pakeha, 19-20)

The experience of being ‘dumped’ is especially traumatic, for a guy to open up to someone is difficult, and there can be fear of becoming emotional:

“...like getting turned down and that and feel really bummed out – ashamed.” (Samoan, 17-18)
“Most guys are probably shy to let out their feelings and emotions and all that. Like crying’s a big one – hardly any of my mates say if they need to cry, they’ll walk off... It’s hard for a guy to open up to someone I reckon.” (Pakeha, 17-18)

At its worst a broken relationship can contribute to thoughts of suicide. At its best a broken relationship reveals simply that its *“difficult dealing with emotional issues.”* (focus group). Either way it brings up the fear of being alone, and maybe being unable to find a relationship.

“There’s the concern of being on your own when you’re not in a relationship, you’re concerned with never finding one, you know, ending up a sad, lonely old man.” (Pakeha, 17-18)

The emotional issues most commonly talked about generally involve shame. The strongest trigger for shame is either feeling rejected by another person because you are not good enough, or feeling unable to measure up to that person’s standards in the first place because of inexperience, anxiety, shyness, lack of confidence, or simply not knowing what to do.

“There is the fear about performance, not being able to perform to all the expectations. There is always bragging – how long people can last, teasing and stuff... I was quite anxious about if I was able to perform well. Even though I figured it wasn’t something that I would worry about I sort of felt shy in that area and felt like I couldn’t talk to anyone about my fears.” (Pakeha, 19-20)

“For me it is strictly in the area of inexperience. Am I doing it right...are they liking it or not.” (Pakeha, 19-20)

The fear of ridicule is what underlies much of this, and its worst form of expression is when it begins to approach the public arena, as for example, when a person who has been a partner *“and you think they’re sweet to talk to and then they go and say something to someone.”* (Pakeha, 17-18).

Concerns around the issue of sexual difference received a reasonable amount of discussion. Generally it is felt that there needs to be more acceptance of gay sexuality, and that being comfortable with one's sexual orientation, and having the opportunity to be different but still develop normally, needs to be a priority. Finding a good place to do this can be difficult:

"You search them out.... the environment there was really suffocating actually." (Asian, 19-20)

"Now it's okay to be homosexual or bisexual or heterosexual. I think people are exploring their sexuality more and with that exploration, more concerns and worries can arise." (Pakeha, 17-18)

One last fear worth mentioning is the problem of peer pressure. This issue was not talked about a great deal, but its effect in terms of the attribution of problem status to feelings (which I refer to above as a 'minefield') is suggestive. Peer pressure was spoken of mostly in the individual discussions. In this context one young man suggested that *"virgins are not cool, but the sense is that most are ... it's the attitude of class misfits, others are less concerned about virginity."* (focus group)

"No one actually sits and talks about how it is alright for you to feel like this and that (you will) feel insecure... and as a man we aren't supposed to feel insecure." (Pakeha, 19-20)

Another man suggested that one's drinking performance is considered to be more important than both sexual performance, and being in a relationship. There was also one mention of sexual abuse by older men as a fear.

HOW WELL ARE CURRENT STRATEGIES WORKING FOR YOUNG MEN? (What relevant resources are available?)

Official Sources are Delivering the Goods in Name Only

There are five primary sources from which young men say they draw the majority of their knowledge about sex and relationships. In order of significance these are:

- School Sex Education classes
- The media: Porno magazines, Cleo, television, videos, and the internet
- Friends
- Family, either parents or brothers and sisters
- Personal experience with their partners

"You just use the internet, check web pages, some people go to the library." (Asian, 17-18)

"They learn from porn videos and television and so many people have misconceptions, the ideas got about perfect relationships and the perfect man and all that bullshit." (Pakeha, 19-20)

"I guess I just learned about stuff from my friends and older brothers or older friends or just experienced friends." (Pakeha, 19-20)

“I’m closer to my Dad than my Mum, sort of, to talk about that sort of thing. Like Dad’s a guy and he’s been through it before and that, it’s a bit easier.” (Pakeha, 17-18)

“Some people wait till they have a sexual partner and then you start your sexual development and learn about themselves through that or through self-exploration.” (Pakeha, 19-20)

Other mentions include Family Planning, Youthline, Rainbow Youth, Sexual Health and Community Services, and the Hero Parade.

Schools comprised approximately a third of all mention of sources from which young men gather their knowledge about sex - twice that recorded for either the media, or friends. Quite a few commented that what schools provide is quite good, is getting better, and that *“there is quite a bit of sexual knowledge, it has increased a hell of a lot... in schools.”* (Pakeha, 19-20). The more general pattern is one of some considerable criticism of the content and delivery of the information that schools provide.

In particular it is felt that much of the knowledge gained from schools is *“vague”* (Pakeha, 19-20), *“very basic”*, and *“just biology”* (Pakeha, 17-18) - it seems to only *“scratch the surface”* (Asian, 19-20), and leave many questions unanswered. Part of the problem is perhaps, as one young man noted, that *“half the teachers are embarrassed to talk about it, anyway.”* (Asian, 19-20) But in addition to this there is a sense that group discussions need to *“go deeper”* (focus group) that they need to explore feelings and relationships. That said, the safety of anonymity has much to recommend it, and class discussions that do not enforce participation can be greatly valued. Furthermore, there is a desire to know some of the really fine technical details, to be shown how condoms work for example, and to learn the safety issues around oral sex.

A further complaint is recorded from gay men who felt that same-sex issues are not mentioned in schools.

“There was sex education in fifth form and that was it. And sex wasn’t spoken about after that, especially gay sex – it’s just a dirty word.” (Pakeha, 17-18)

“People from the community came in and talked to us but I think if you’re gay then you have to learn different ways...you have to look to yourself to find things or role models.” (Maori, 19-20)

Only one school was mentioned by name, once, in the discussions. It was said that Western Springs College ‘teaches a lot.’ Other organisations singled out for positive comment include Youthline, Family Planning, and Rainbow Youth, although all of these organisations also, were positively mentioned just once.

“There’s heaps of things like Youthline now, that you can ring up and talk....and now they’ve got that Youth Centre down there...” (Pakeha, 17-18)

In general there was a feeling that these men wanted more information on relationships, and a higher profile for those social services that are available.

“I think ours was a fairly conservative school, so I imagine some other schools did, but I came out of school and didn’t know anything about these services.” (Pakeha, 19-20)

Furthermore younger men aged 15 – 16 were more likely to be satisfied, whereas those who are older, 19 – 20, tended to look back and feel they had not been given enough.

WHAT MIGHT WORK BETTER?

School and the Media have Established a Significant Role for Themselves

There are two arenas, both widely know and highly accessible to young men, which are currently favored for information about sex and relationships – schools and the media.

Schools are considered to be the best place to learn. However there are a number of provisos on this. Firstly sex education is not necessarily seen as the territory of teachers.

“It would be embarrassing to have your teacher or someone older tell you what to do about sex.”
(Asian, 17-28)

It would be possible to bring in outside specialists.

“So people from outside, maybe young people teaching young people, real people, faces, bring the whole youth culture and presence into the classroom.” (Pakeha, 19-20)

Also, young men want courses expanded and made more widely available, learning that begins at an earlier age, is more interactive, interesting, and able to deal with both the subtleties of emotional experience and the matter-of-fact practicalities of safe sex. It needs to be approachable though:

“There was a counselling service which ran once a week and to use it you had to make an appointment with the Dean and you don’t want them to know you have a problem and what’s it about... so probably more confidential.” (Asian, 19-20)

The various forms of media rate a very close second to the school. Television and possibly radio could provide short and practical information to raise awareness. Likewise the greater circulation and availability of posters and pamphlets could achieve the same effect:

“I think if you have a reliable source to just come up to, whether it be books, magazines, whatever, just lying around that have got it right, is valid and reliable.” (Pakeha, 15-16)

We Won't Be Offended!

'Openness and honesty in this day and age is essential.' (Pakeha, 17-18)

Part and parcel of the interest that young men have in more widely available information and learning, is their desire to see a change in the attitude of knowledge providers. There is a feeling that sex is:

'swept under the carpet. There's a lot of misconceptions. I think in New Zealand society sex is still something that no-one really wants to talk about.' (Pakeha, 17-18)

And that it's made out to be:

"a real bad thing, like they never have any good points about it." (Asian, 15-16).

Adults could initiate a multitude of changes to demonstrate their willingness to assist young men to achieve greater openness on this topic:

- Make condoms more widely available, especially in schools.
'If they are going to have sex they will have it no matter what, whether with or without condoms and I think it's better that they are there than not.' (Pakeha, 19-20)
- Help understanding and acceptance of the difference between gay and straight sexuality, and talk about sexual orientation earlier - sixteen is too late.
- Put the emphasis on safe sex.
"We need programmes portraying the good side of having safe sex." (Asian, 17-18)
"Don't just teach us how to say no, teach us about decision making and how to do it safely."
(focus group)
- Provide more knowledge about contraception, and the risks and realities of STIs.

"The more people there are out there to talk to, the better it would be. Some people just react better to others and talk more to them, you can just open up." (Pakeha, 17-18)

PART ONE: SELF DEFINITION OF SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

HOW DO YOUNG MEN DEFINE GOOD SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH?

What Are You Talking About?

This question was not well understood by many of the respondents. It tended to elicit a sense of confusion about what is meant, and it generated a wide variety of answers:

Less than a third of young men felt that good sexual and reproductive health refers to safe sex or the use of condoms.

“When guys talk about sex they don’t really talk about the health side of it, they talk about who they’re with, and who they want to be with. They worry about it most of the time as well. Actually, health-wise maybe they should talk about diseases and how safe they are.” (Asian, 19-20)

The next most significant responses covered a variety of areas:

- Having lots of sex, ‘*getting a boner,*’ masturbating, and ‘*experiencing new moves.*’ (focus group)
- The qualities of a relationship. Specific reference was made to the gaining of mutual consent, being open about feelings, caring for the other person, having a healthy and positive relationship, and good feelings about sex.
“Take all the necessary precautions. Make sure it’s a mutual agreement, that you’re not pushing the other person.” (Pakeha, 17-18)
- Physical, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing.
“I think you have to come forward if you are sexual, if you are physical, mentally and spiritually and take a holistic approach to good health. If you’re not using sex to escape or as a power thing, perhaps you would be healthier.” (Maori, 19-20)
- The exercise of care about who you sleep with, gaining knowledge about their history, and possibly limiting the number of partners one has.
“I guess wearing a condom and knowing your partner’s past history and not sleeping with people who are too dodgy.” (Pakeha, 17-18)

Other less frequent responses include:

- Looking out for physical symptoms and bodily changes.
- Gaining knowledge about potential problems.
- Being clean.

Young Men Are Only Interested In Pleasure

There was a very cynical attitude in the early responses of the young women when it came to addressing what they felt were young men's attitudes. There was a wide-spread view that men were mostly concerned with their pure ability to perform and pursuit of pleasure. About half commented that they did not feel men thought much about health and safety issues. A few reflected on the position of partners and relationships indicating they have had experiences of men who value these things, and others who don't. This implies that women consider these issues relevant to the topic of sexual and reproductive health.

"Men have sex to please themselves and don't think about the girl or contraceptives, STDs..."

"Men don't think about (health) deeply – take it or leave it" (focus group)

DO YOUNG MEN SEE A PROBLEM ?

No Worries Mate

It appears that about a fifth of men believe there is no problem. Only very occasionally is this because of the adequacy of current information and services.

OK, the Problem is Girls: Promiscuity, Pregnancy, Peer Pressure, and STIs

Promiscuity is considered by some young men to be too wide-spread. Often it is seen to be caused by girls who *"turn everybody on"*, *"think they are alright if they can have sex and babies,"* and *"are young and inexperienced."* (focus group)

"I think young people have sex with too many partners. I think they have sex then find another one too quick..." (Asian, 17-18)

Pregnancy is considered to be a problem of similar proportions, and is sometimes also blamed on young girls. Pressure to have sex is also a problem, and occasionally it too can be attributed to girls, too many of whom are *"afraid to be a virgin."* There is also peer pressure to be sexual.

Finally, STIs are a problem because there are *"lots of them going around"* and because *"your partner might have one."* (focus group)

The Problem is Not Unsafe Sex - it's Girls and Emotions

Lack of knowledge about safe sex, or the unwillingness to practice it, gets very little mention. Condoms were talked about even less, and received good and bad press: “lots of guys hate wearing condoms”.(Pakeha, 19-20)

An issue that eclipses all of these in the minds of young men, is how to respond when the “girls get all bitchy,” want to stop, or say no (focus group). One young man was able, perhaps, to see a little deeper into this problem. He commented that:

“females see sex as something within a relationship and males just something you do – it leads to people being emotionally upset.” (Pakeha, 19-20)

It is this kind of talk, about “emotional upsets,” “domestic problems,” not being able to talk openly, and feeling the “pressure to feel good and fit in,”(focus group) that show some of the deeper fears that plague young men in their sexual thoughts and encounters.

“I’m in a relationship at the moment which isn’t really working, I’m worried how to tell them I want to break up...maybe I’m worried that I should be trying to make the relationship work, but then....worried I don’t really have the time or effort to do that.” (Pakeha, 17-18)

Ignorance and Shame Exist

There is some comment about the difficulty of being informed about certain issues:

- Difficult to get positive information about sexual orientation.
- Finding information out is embarrassing.
- Choices are being made out of ignorance.
- No education about sexual relationships.

Men Want Sex Without Thinking

Almost all the young women showed great concern about the lack of awareness and thought men seemed to put into the issue of sex and health. A few mentioned lack of maturity as being significant while about a third noted concern over attitudes to women being part of the problem – being seen as “*Barbie dolls*”. Two young women queried whether these views were merely stereotypes of men and not the whole story, and if young men who *are* aware of problems perhaps are just unsure of how to deal with it or get help.

“Most (men) don’t really think about the spread of STIs and AIDS.”

“Some men don’t really see the problem” (focus group)

Young Men and Women Have Very Different Priorities

Most of the women were very aware of big differences in what was important to them in comparison to men. They particularly noted how worries about health and protection from pregnancy are major concerns to young women while these are often not considered by men.

“Women see the problem more than men because girls are always worried about pregnancy or STIs or AIDS”

“...all men want is sex in a relationship and women usually want more than physical in the relationship.”

One young woman, however commented that perhaps it was women too that could consider their attitudes:

“Young women are wanting a committed relationship too early – guys need to be given time to play around and learn to be more mature.” (focus group)

HOW GOOD IS YOUNG MEN'S SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH?

Guessing Abounds

This question was not very well comprehended. About three in ten responses simply suggested that young men have good sexual and reproductive health. Notably however, men aged 19 – 20 were more likely to be informed of the facts, and more willing to get themselves tested at a Clinic. The only other pattern to emerge was from men who indicated that they simply do not know how good their health really is.

“Most people wouldn't know whether they are healthy or not. I mean, as long as you can get it up and can shoot, whatever you need to, then you are filling your end of the bargain.” (Pakeha, 19-20)

There was some mention that it is only a few men who are not careful - guys who “*are real sleazy*” (Maori, 15-16) and selfish, or guys who live on the street, outside of normal society. A few men suggested that it's “*a bit slack in a lot of cases,*” or that “*only some take care and it could be better.*” (focus group)

“There's a few guys I know out there who go around the block a few times and people tend to stay clear of them.” (Pakeha, 17-18)

Men are Felt to be Irresponsible

All but two of the young women were unhappy with the level of consideration men put into sexual or reproductive health.

“They are careless. They don't think anything will happen to them. Some guys get check-ups but I don't know any guys who have.”

A few noted, again, that women seemed to have better health awareness and responsibility than men. About half of them commented that they felt the situation could be improved by more education and some emphasis upon subtleties like the “*value of things*” and the place of sex in their lives including in relation to marriage:

“There's a need for more sexual education – need to know more about sexuality.” (focus group)

PART TWO: LEARNING

WHAT DO YOUNG MEN WANT TO KNOW?

Rated X

One third of comments about the knowledge and skills that young men want to learn, refer to various aspects of the strictly physical pleasures associated with having sex:

- Different positions and techniques.
- How to turn a woman on, give her pleasure, and help her to have an orgasm.
- What to do when having sex.

There appears to be a great deal of uncertainty and anxiety about what the sex act actually involves, and much more so in the 15 – 18 age band than the 19 -20. In groups young men tend to translate this into talk which is suggestive of the need to perform. In private they become more sensitive, and express a very real interest and curiosity in how they can improve their partner's physical pleasure.

“Skills, probably how to satisfy a woman, ‘cause that is the worst thing that comes to my mind, that I’m not doing it right.” (Pakeha, 19-20)

“Really do want to know how to give a woman pleasure, how to use different techniques and methods. To know how to make yourself feel better in a sense.” (Asian, 17-18)

Wanting to be Responsible is High on the Agenda

A further three in ten comments emphasize an interest in learning about safe sex. Most often this is talked about in terms of wanting to learn all about the different forms of contraception.

“I know the different types of contraception, but I’d like to also know the specifics about them... you know like if you miss one, how long do you have to wait till it’s effective again, the different dangers that may be involved with each method and the effectiveness, you know, on a ranked scale.” (Pakeha, 15-16)

Sometimes it may be expressed as wanting to avoid STIs, or pregnancy. There appears to be a great deal of confusion and ignorance about what methods are available, how to use them, the associated risks and dangers, and their overall effectiveness. Let alone the problem of actually using contraception, there’s a vast amount of confusion about how to decide what to use, and the consequences this choice entails.

“There is some jumble of information, but they need straight answers.” (Pakeha, 19-20)

Emotions are So Difficult

*“How to have a sexual relationship and a relationship at the same time. How do you do it?”
(Pakeha, 19-20)*

Recognizing the fact that sex always involves some form of relationship with another person, is not easy for young men. However they are willing to learn, and this is true throughout all the different age groups.

Certainly for men feelings are more difficult and complex than sex. The latter at least appears to be reducible to simply *doing* certain things. Comments about relationships however, demonstrate a sense of entering into territory that is far more uncertain. Territory where simply saying ‘yes’ or ‘no’ becomes a problem.

“How to handle yourself in relationships. They’ll want to have sex when they think they’re ready enough... well physically they are but you know in their heads they’re not sure.” (Asian, 19-20)

What do people want in relationships? How do you improve a relationship? How do you discuss something with your partner? How do you verbalise a feeling? How do you communicate with those you are intimate with? How do you look after somebody? In other words, how do take all of this complex relationship stuff, which is so difficult to avoid, and which does actually mean a great deal to you, and successfully mix it with sex?

“Emotions was something you did with your girlfriend, sex was something you did with someone you got with at a party and it meant nothing.” (Pakeha, 19-20)

Understanding is Needed

Again, the need for more education was emphasised here by most of the female respondents. They requested more education on anatomy and sexual functioning, health risks, contraception and where to get help and information when they need it. However there was even more concern here about *understanding* than just information. More than half of the comments addressed the needs for better communication skills or training in skills to deal better with anger, taking responsibility and thinking out possible consequences of their actions. More than a third of the comments requested men learn more about women and their needs and particularly how to please them. One confirmed that men have shown a desire to learn more about this:

“They are naïve about women’s wants and needs. They seem to want to know more about women’s needs, how they work etcetera.”

“They need to learn more about what women go through and that relationships are about trust and loving – not slam, bam, thank you mam.” (focus group)

DO THEY GET ENOUGH OF THE RIGHT INFORMATION ON SEX NOW?

Frequently Not

About half the responses from men state that they do not get enough of the right information about sex. These comments are more than twice as numerous as those which say they do.

Amongst 15 – 16 year olds there is a feeling that they are only getting strictly biological information, and that this is too limited.

In the 17 – 18 year olds this theme is developed a little further – the “how to” is not explained.

Overall those aged 17 – 20 are looking for more information.

There are a few comments to the effect that friends and the media can be the main source of information - or misinformation, that it depends on which school you attend, and that the information is out there but only those with initiative actually find it.

“It is available if you sort of know where to go. Guys tend to be a little lazy, don’t really explore things enough as they should do.” (Pakeha, 15-16)

Comments from gay men suggest that information about homosexuality is especially lacking.

“Most of the stuff was for straights...and the gay stuff were much more aimed towards the much older age bracket. They tend to be about sex practices that young men, the young men I know anyway, don’t do often, like anal sex... because we’re not in long-term relationships.” (Pakeha, 17-18)

Information in Itself May Not Be Enough

The young women were split in their response to this question. A quarter commented favourably on the wide range of information sources available, citing education in school, people to talk to, TV, radio, films and the internet.

However over a third were still concerned. Most of these women felt that either the information given was too selective and didn’t cover all the important topics or there were problems with what young men did with what they learned. There were concerns that even with the right information they may lack the understanding, skills or maturity to put it into use or that their attitudes are not conducive to using it well:

“They get the right information but they do not have enough respect for it.”

“There is still a lot of talk that contraception is the woman’s job and sex is not good with condoms.”

“Young people learn from movies, TV etcetera but never really have an open and proper talk.”
(focus group)

WHAT DO THEY WANT TO FIND OUT, AND HOW WOULD THEY LIKE IT TO HAPPEN ?

Give us Access to More Specialist Information

The two most popular ways in which young men want to learn about sex are:

- From the various forms of media: books, magazines, leaflets, videos, television.
- From people with expertise in this area, specialists who may be able to visit the school.

The popularity of the media as a source of information about sex, is perhaps very well explained by one young man who suggested that this kind of learning needs to be anonymous, *“the embarrassment of talking to someone is a drawback.”* (focus group) Certainly it is true that several men spoke about wanting to learn from somebody they do not know, a person who is not otherwise involved in their life, *“the more anonymous the better”* (focus group).

“I would have liked to know things like what facilities there are available.

Where the safe places to go are.” (Pakeha, 17-18)

“They have to find the way of having information where people can get it discretely, without walking up to a stand in front of all their friends and grabbing a pamphlet.” (Pakeha, 17-18)

In addition it could also be noted that group learning was sometimes described as difficult, and that *“co-ed schools can be embarrassing”*. (focus group) The balance of comments suggests however, that group learning, being able to *“find out other people’s views on the topic”* (Samoan,17-18) is preferable. Finally, some interest was expressed in learning from somebody of a similar age, the really significant underlying message being somebody who understands us *“so we can relate and they can relate to our experiences.”* (focus group)

“You can get information and be confidential and there are no repercussions. Someone external from their lives and someone who can be objective. As close to the same ages as well.” (Pakeha, 15-16)

Reflections such as this, which highlight the sensitive, potentially embarrassing, but essential, nature of the topic. These perhaps inspire the feeling amongst young men that a variety of resources exist outside of the school which could be harnessed for their benefit. But while some comments suggest an interest in gathering knowledge directly from organisations such as Rainbow Youth, Auckland Sexual Health, and from Youth Workers, the majority seem to suggest learning should remain within the school, provided that it can be done by people with some specialist skill. The problem at present is that schools may be perceived to be on a different level to where young men are at with sex, and consequently ‘people aren’t thrilled about learning this in school.’

There are a number of comments which indicate that, if they are to learn effectively, the kind of environment that young men hope can be created has as much to do with the *style* of learning as the content. Specifically, the person dispensing knowledge would be somebody you can trust, somebody who is accepting, respectful, non-threatening, and non-judgmental. It is not so much that teachers are perceived as unable to do this – several comments indicate that they can – rather that there may well be specialists who could do it better.

“But I think the way that information is put at the moment is really, really negative and it tends to be almost in a preaching manner.” (Pakeha, 17-18)

Education Must Come from a Variety of Trusted Sources

Women emphasised people as the best learning sources rather than the media. The impression seemed to be that here is a need for young people to have a *variety* of people to talk to. There were three categories mentioned:

- Girlfriends (especially relationship-wise) and friends – but with cautions about “*fibs from peers.*”
- Male role models are potentially very valuable – trusted men, idols, “*Fathers need to put in input as well.*” (focus group)
- Experts, teachers, community organisations.

They agreed that the school venue is a good convenient place for this learning but that there may also be a need for more anonymous, private environments. People with expertise and experience were considered valuable as well as community resources like Youthline. Whatever the source, all agreed it needed to be trustworthy and easy to access.

On the issue of women as educators, one young woman had this to say:

“They feel better with a guy but most guys are not as good as women with emotion. So it’s hard to break that cycle of it being a women’s job to communicate with boys on growing up.” (focus group)

This comment from one of the men may be an answer:

“I think you should get positive mentors in the community, positive role models so you can use these people to teach. Basically like yourself – community groups.” (Maori, 17-18)

DO PROGRAMMES FOR YOUNG MEN NEED TO BE DIFFERENT AND SEPARATE FROM PROGRAMMES FOR YOUNG WOMEN?

One Size Does Not Fit All

- About two in five young men would like to participate in programmes that include young women.
- About a quarter of young men want separate learning for men and women
- Another quarter of men want learning that is both separate and together, in other words classes would teach some aspects of the programme separately, and other aspects in a mixed group.
- Gay men express an interest in learning which is separate and specific to their needs.

Reasons offered in support of the different positions on this issue typically emphasise either one of two kinds of need.

Those advocating an inclusive approach to learning generally focus upon the importance of increased understanding between men and women. They feel that:

“women should know what men go through and men should know what women go through.”
(focus group)

The urge for separate learning comes out of a sense of feeling that, both personally, and for men and women generally, some issues simply cannot be discussed openly, honestly, and without embarrassment, in mixed groups. Thus it is suggested that *“guys won’t ask questions if women are there”* (focus group) and that:

“sexuality is almost a different thing for men and women. Men have to have it explained a different way to women, I guess.” (Pakeha, 17-18)

“Some different groups most definitely, because the female body is different to the male body so there should be some issues that are different...but otherwise all the rest should be girls and guys together. Guys sometimes feel more comfortable in just a group of guys, without the females in the discussion.” (Pakeha, 19-20)

The third option, learning which both separates and brings together, itself has a number of variations. In other words, learning could either start out separately, with a goal of coming together at some point, or it could begin in a mixed group, only to separate further down the track. Clearly there are a variety of options available, and young men are not cut of the same cloth in their feelings about these.

Can’t We Have it Both Ways?

Very similarly to the men, women saw both options as having their value. While recognising that there are areas men may find too difficult to talk about usefully in a mixed group, and topics where sharing within a single-sex group could be very helpful, they felt that it was invaluable for both sexes to have time to work and talk together to really understand each other. This was because:

“People need to know what it’s like for each other.” (focus group)

HOW MUCH DO THEY KNOW ABOUT CONTRACEPTION AND SAFE SEX?

We Think We Know

About half the comments suggest that young men are well informed about contraception and safe sex. A further third of commentary however is from men who claim that there are gaps, both in knowledge and in practice, such that more information and learning is necessary. The age breakdown shows that 15 – 16 year olds know about contraception, but only the 17 – 20 year olds know about safe sex.

“I don’t think many people realise that condoms don’t always work. You know a friend of mine has just got pregnant because she chose not to use condoms because she thought the pill would work all the time. I don’t think people really know enough.” (Pakeha, 17-18)

“You’ve got a few that don’t. They think they’ll be alright – they don’t really look after themselves.” (Samoan, 17-18)

A Little Knowledge is Not Enough

Although most of the women felt that most men knew the ‘basics’ (ie. use of condoms) there was real concern in about half the comments that men were choosing not to use their knowledge and share in the responsibility. They felt men also needed to know risk factors even with the contraceptive pill and what options were available if there were problems, like *“The morning-after pill!”*.

“Yeah – the basics, but they need to know a lot more. They think they know what they need to know but I don’t think they do.” (focus group)

WHAT OTHER INFORMATION AND SKILLS DO THEY WANT TO LEARN?

Responses to this question from the men do not suggest any areas that need to be covered, other than those already referred to previously.

Issues reiterated here by the women were health concerns, contraception and relationship skills. In addition to these themes the following ideas were also noted:

- Respect for sex
- How to be a man (what this means)
- Children and parenting.

PART THREE: RESPONSIBILITY ISSUES

WHO SHOULD TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR SAFE SEX AND CONTRACEPTION?

Both is Ideal but in Reality Maybe Women do this

Virtually all the responses from young men suggest that they firmly believe that responsibility rests with both parties.

However it appears that about one in ten young men feel that they are the ones who should be responsible

A few comments from men suggest that in actual reality women are more likely to be made responsible. As the men suggested, women said they felt the bottom line would always be their responsibility

“..because they are the ones that can get pregnant.” (focus group)

“Both parties...but most of the time it’s the girls I think.” (Maori, 15-16)

“I know definitely among my straight friends the girl always takes most responsibility, even to the extent of always making sure she has condoms available.”(Pakeha, 17-18)

Women reflected these same views with unanimous support for both partners taking responsibility. One woman specified that this meant both sexes should carry contraceptives and another pointed out the need for both to be *actively* responsible due to there always being risk factors.

“It’s safety for both, so both should be involved in it.” (Pakeha, 19-20)

There were also suggestions that there were others that should be sharing this responsibility:

“I feel that it’s also some of the responsibility of the community.” (Maori, 19-20)

“From the people who are having sex to the people who are informing them.” (Asian, 19-20)

“Friends, like if your friends are not having safe sex it should be on your agenda to let them know.”
(Pakeha, 19-20)

WHO SHOULD DECIDE WHEN SEX HAPPENS?

This is Not a Simple Conversation

Most young men feel that any decisions about when sex happens should be made by both the people concerned. One man suggested that:

“men may test the waters and see what the response is, but it’s certainly not talked about openly”
(focus group)

Although women felt strongly that it should be a person’s individual decision and agreed upon together they had other concerns and considerations. Some comments emphasised the importance of not rushing the decision and a number of others stressed communication and not pressuring the other person.

“More like you have to have consent and stuff from the other person – you can’t just force it on them or else you’ll get into trouble.” (Samoan, 17-18)

“It’s between two people, two people should decide.” (Asian, 17-18)

“Should be two-way. No one should feel they have to do it. It should be special.”
(women’s focus group)

One young woman expressed concern that men can be less discerning,

“Usually the guy will have it whenever, so it comes down to the girl.” (focus group)

A young man agreed: *“The woman should.”* (Maori, 15-16)

Others pointed out religious and family influences, beliefs and values that may affect this decision.

HOW DO YOUNG MEN KNOW WHEN IT'S OKAY TO HAVE SEX?

When It Feels Right

"It could be a verbal thing or body language." (Samoan, 17-18)

Half the responses from young men emphasise the importance of feelings and intuition. In other words, the decision to have sex is often made without it being spoken about. The whole event relies a great deal upon actions and gestures. Men make judgements about the meaning of these signals according to the feelings they have in response - you need to be able to read *"the body language, it's not talked about"*, it's all *"negotiated non-verbally,"* according to the *"woman's responding in certain ways."* (focus group) Intuition, feeling okay within yourself, provides the signal to proceed.

"I think basically just when it feels right." (Maori, 19-20)

Some were aware of the risks in this:

"It's hit and miss. You might get the wrong impression. Maybe she's just trying to be friendly, but you think she wants more than friendship." (Indian, 17-18)

"I don't think there's a conscious decision. I don't think they know if it's okay, but they just want to." (Asian, 19-20)

There were also other influences:

"A lot of the time it will be blurred by pressure or alcohol or drugs. So much pressure about being a man and about having sex and bragging about it with friends." (Pakeha, 19-20)

Talk About It

Fewer men, about a fifth, rely upon either talking with their partner, or establishing a relationship with her. These men either rely upon spoken communication rather than gesture in the early stages, or they need to have spent time getting to know their partner sufficiently well before they broach the topic of sex verbally. This may occur fairly early on in the relationship, but frequently they make reference to first arriving at a place where both partners know each other well before they begin to discuss sex, and are both ready for it.

"I think in an ideal world it should be talked about before anything happens... but that's an ideal world and sometimes it doesn't happen." (Pakeha, 15-16)

There are some suggested advantages to the talking approach:

"Well, they'll know (if it's okay to have sex) if they talk to their partner, communication's a big thing. If you don't talk about it, you're not going to know anything about what the other person wants. You could suggest things to each other." (Pakeha, 17-18)

Others

Ideas from men about knowing when it's okay to have sex, which receive less frequent mention include:

- Being responsible and having knowledge of safe sex.
- When the girl is old enough

Feeling and Intuition May be Mistaken

The 'When it feels right' category was mentioned by a number of women too but there seemed with this approach an element of mystery – *"They just know"*, and skepticism – *"They don't know when it's okay, they just want to do it."*

By far the majority of women talked of it being the result of a process between the two parties. There did seem to be differences in expectations within this category. Most went for equality in the process:

"When it's mutual."

"When both are willing and want to."

"They should talk to you first on how you feel and not put pressure on you."

A number, however, implied their voice as a woman might be more passive – agreeing to, rather than actively choosing to:

"When his partner agrees to it."

"When he has asked the girl if it is alright."

"When he thinks the partner is ready."

One young woman felt it was better for the woman to initiate it when she wants to:

"When the woman talks about it or leads him on to the subject."

(focus group)

There were also individual comments on the importance of free will, being with someone you care about and when you have sufficient knowledge about contraception.

PART FOUR: FERTILITY AND FATHERHOOD

DO YOUNG MEN THINK ABOUT BECOMING FATHERS?

Simple for Men

Amongst men there is a roughly even split between those who do think about becoming fathers in the future, and those who do not really give the idea any consideration. The sense of hoping to become a father in future carries with it a significant proviso - when they're ready.

"I think when I do become a father it would be a lot more planned, and when I'm ready."
(Maori, 19-20)

Furthermore it should be noted that gay men do think about fatherhood.

"I do a lot. I want four kids. I don't know how I'm going to get there, but I want four kids."
(Asian, 19-20)

Hot Topic for Women

Two thirds of the women felt men did not think about fatherhood because they are too focussed on things in the present.

"No, they think about sex, sport, school and their mates." (focus group)

About a third of the female respondents thought that men *do* think about being fathers, but not generally until they are seeking security in a relationship, when they are much older or when it has already happened unplanned. There were a number of comments expressing concern that men do not seriously consider this as a consequence of unsafe sex practices.

WHAT IS THE BEST TIME AND SITUATION TO BECOME A FATHER?

When I'm Financially Secure, Have a Partner, and Aged 25 – 30

The most important criteria for young men anticipating fatherhood is having a secure job and financial security. After this a strong stable relationship, possibly a marriage, is almost as significant to them. Age is an important factor also, with the ideal considered to be during the twenties or early thirties – preferably 25 to 30.

"When both parties are happy about starting a family." (Indian, 17-18)

"To me I think basically when you feel it's the right time and socially and economically you're stable and you're able to support a child well then, yeah, if that's what you want to do." (Maori, 19-20)

About one in ten comments from young men acknowledge the possibility that accident or carelessness can result in unplanned fatherhood.

Being a Father is Emotionally Demanding Too

Women reflected the same considerations as the men, feeling that maturity, a committed relationship and financial security were the main factors. They also considered *emotional* maturity as important too:

“The best time is when they have done everything they want to....”

“The twenties is a good time as they have finished with rebellious teenagehood and so will not affect the baby.” (focus group)

DO THEY FEEL THEY CAN CONTROL THE TIMING OF FATHERHOOD?

Accidents Happen!

Only about one in five comments are from men who believe that they can actually control the timing of fatherhood. All of the rest express some degree of uncertainty.

Four out of five young men have at least some doubt about their ability to control the timing of fatherhood. The range of discussion here includes anything from comments like *“you should be able to if you play it safe”* (Maori, 15-16) and *“to a large extent... probably”* (focus group), through to a very definite *“No.”*

“There’s only so much confidence that you can have with anything, It’s never 100% sure, so before you jump into sex you sort of know the risks involved and know that there is a possibility that something could slip up.” (Pakeha, 15-16)

About two thirds of young men have at least a high level of doubt.

“You can’t control the situation, but you can...oh, oh you can’t really, oh you can if you don’t want to get her pregnant, you can try but it’s hard.” (Maori, 15-26)

One in five men are adamant that the timing of fatherhood can not be controlled.

Men CAN Control Themselves

The majority of women stated strongly that men *did* have control over timing of fatherhood. But a number of the women realised that some men do not *feel* like they are in control, probably due to immaturity, high sex drive or poor attitudes to responsibility for practicing safe sex.

DO THEY KNOW HOW THEY WILL CONTROL TIMING AND FEEL CONFIDENT THEY CAN DO THIS?

No Guarantees

Discussion about this issue covered a wide-range of different topics. Only one theme emerged with any consistency:

About a quarter of comments indicate that young men are confident in their ability to control the timing of fatherhood. We note, however, that remarks of this kind were not backed up with any specific reference to methods, or forms of practice.

Definite means of controlling conception were discussed, although not in great detail. Generally speaking those aged 19 – 20 years were best informed, with 17 – 18 year olds more doubtful, and 15 – 16 year olds sounding a little reckless.

The most popular method is to use condoms, with full knowledge of how they should be used. Sometimes condoms were talked about in isolation, as if by themselves they can solve the problem. Contraceptives generally were also discussed, but not necessarily seen to guarantee definite control. There was almost as much reference to not feeling in control, as there was to using contraception.

“That’s hard, but once you get into a sexual relationship that goes on for a couple of years, you are still getting started and it still might just happen.” (Pakeha, 19-20)

Open discussion and communication with a partner, in other words talking about fatherhood as an issue of concern within a relationship, was raised as a possible strategy by only two men.

“When you like, you get sort of your self-esteem up and you talk to your partner and, like, if they’re keen and that or if they’re not and then you can time it.” (Pakeha, 17-18)

There were a number of comments that show the concern about areas of potential danger:

- One night stands
- Refraining from sex is not a realistic option.
- Positive thinking is used as a method – but it doesn’t always work.
- Knowledge does not translate into practice.
- Ignorance breeds complacency
- Teenagers feel invincible
- Alcohol

Surely Together We Can Achieve This

Most of the women felt that if men had sufficient access to contraceptive information they should be able to confidently control fatherhood choices if they wanted to.

One woman mentioned that confidence and control would be assisted by co-ordination with a partner.

WHAT KIND OF THINGS INFLUENCE DECISIONS, AND ABILITY TO CARRY THROUGH DECISIONS, ABOUT WHEN TO BECOME FATHERS?

Other People

Young men's comments suggest that the influence of their familial and social networks is the single factor that most shapes their decision to have children most.

“Influencing their decisions about when they become fathers would be upbringing, their ideas picked up from society and family.” (Pakeha, 19-20)

The attitudes of significant others, especially parents, fathers in particular, and to a lesser extent friends, holds considerable sway over the decisions that are made.

“Probably their own fathers really, influence them. If you know when they became fathers and had kids and stuff. Off older people.” (Maori, 15-16)

The possibility that decisions could be made under pressure is real, and in the 17 – 18 year band, in particular, peer pressure can be a strong influence. That said however, the influence of others may also be positive, it may attract and draw them toward an ideal of happiness:

“You probably see a lot of other people with kids and see how happy they are and you want to have one as well.” (Samoan, 17-18)

Relationships and Money

A stable and loving relationship is a further significant factor. This relationship would need to be with the 'right person,' and for many, marriage would be important. After that, financial security, the ability to earn money sufficient to support both the relationship and the child, is also very important. Factors of this kind, which tend to indicate a sense of responsibility, are more likely to be considered by men aged 19 – 20 .

Many Have Doubts and Some are Ignorant

Fatherhood is not always an attractive option to young men. Their major fear is of becoming trapped and finding themselves in a situation where the freedom of their youth is violated.

“Some people have kids later – they don't want someone to get in their way.” (Asian, 17-18)

One young man pointed out the need for some training in fatherhood:

“There has to be a lot more things available for men out there to know how to be a father. Basically their only role model is their own father and if they're not positive, well then they're not going to be a good father to that child.” (Maori, 19-20)

Women Agree

Women agreed with men that ‘significant others’, would have an influence on this topic, especially parents, family, and culture and religion. They also noted that using friends as role models can help making realistic decisions.

They reiterated the themes of committed relationship, physical and emotional maturity and financial security as features to support decisions on timing; and hormones and sex drive as potential problem areas.

VIEWS OF THE ROLE YOUNG MEN SHOULD HAVE IN ABORTION ISSUES

Men Think Women Should Decide

Overall the most common response is from men who feel that the final decision, about whether or not a child is to be kept, must ultimately rest with the woman. This is especially so in the 19 – 20 age band, but not so common in those aged 15 – 18 years.

Quite a number of young men across all age groups feel that their views on this subject should be heard, but the expressions of anxiety about being excluded from the decision-making process are more likely to be found in those aged 15 – 18 years. Sometimes the men who express this kind of sentiment are wanting a joint decision. More of them are, however, in the final analysis, prepared to accept a woman’s decision.

“I mean she’s the one that’s got to give birth and take care of the baby.” (Indian, 17-18)

“Men should have some right but not maybe half as much as the mother ‘cause she goes through the whole process.” (Asian, 17-18)

It is worth noting that several men commented that this is “*one of the hardest issues to face,*” (Pakeha, 19-20) that “*guys don’t talk about it much,*” and, more importantly perhaps, that they have “*not much experience around (how to make) decisions (like this).*” (focus group) There is then a feeling that this issue is fraught with difficulty, that the requisite knowledge and experience necessary to deal with it are absolutely lacking.

“You’ve done the deed, you’ve got to do the time. Its back down to the female and she should be supported by the male.”(Pakeha, 15-16)

Women Feel they Must Have the Final Say

More than half of those who commented felt that the father’s wishes should be heard and taken into account if possible. However, the vast majority of the women also shared the attitude that, as it is the woman who will carry, give birth to, and probably ultimately care for the child, the final decision must come down to her. There was a hope that it could be “*a partnership decision*” and that talking about it may even lead to a happier outcome:

“The male should have a say because if they talk about it they may decide to keep the baby.”

Two commented that if the girl chooses to keep the child the boy should stand by her and support her, but one woman felt that if the girl makes such a choice she “*should understand that she will be on her own.*”
(focus group)

PART FIVE: STIs

DO YOUNG MEN WORRY ABOUT SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS?

Men say they do Worry

An overwhelming number of young men do worry about STIs. Gay men feel they have a higher risk, and in particular are concerned about HIV.

Women say: They only Worry when its too Late!

Although a few of the women thought that STIs were as much a problem to men as it is to them, the majority thought that men did not take the issue seriously enough and tended to convince themselves it would not happen to them. They would worry about it too late, maybe after they find they have picked something up or:

“They don’t worry about it while they’re having sex.”

“Maybe after, if they hear the person they had sex with may have had a lot of partners.”

One woman was also concerned for those that caught something:

“Those that are not educated don’t get it treated or are too ashamed to get medication or don’t know where to go to talk about it.” (focus group)

Some men backed this up:

“Some guys don’t know what to do and just don’t want to talk about it and hope it will go away.”
(Pakeha, 17-18)

DO THEY KNOW HOW TO AVOID THEM, AND FEEL THAT THEY HAVE THE MEANS AND SKILLS TO DO THIS?

There are Practical Problems

Most comments indicate that young men feel both that they know how, and that they are able, to avoid STIs. However, there are various problems:

Those aged 15 – 16 say that they lack access to condoms.

Those aged 17 – 18 appear to be fairly lazy on the issue of using them:

“I think their hormones take over when they want to have sex.” (Pakeha, 17-18)

Those aged 19 – 20 appear ambivalent, both in terms of their level of ability and commitment:

“I’d say a lot of the time I just go along with whatever the girl wants, and if she doesn’t want a condom and things like that.” (Pakeha, 19-20)

Overall then there are a number of problems that young men have avoiding STIs. Men also don’t necessarily know how to use condoms, they might not bother trying, and (as some men indicate) condoms are not as safe as generally believed. Finally the use of alcohol can impair their willingness or ability to avoid STIs.

“They’re adolescents, they think they’re invincible....they still think they’re right.” (Pakeha,19-20)

“People have got, like, a false awareness, or a false hope that if they just wear a condom then they will be safe, but it doesn’t give you a complete guarantee.” (Maori, 19-20)

Women think Men may only have Superficial Information

Women believed that there was plenty of good accurate information available, including through school. But some of the women felt that there were men who had not fully grasped that not all STIs are visible and were still thinking that if they picked something up *“a pill should do the trick.”* (focus group)

Some men backed this view up:

“Guys hear about it all and think ‘Oh well, you can treat them and all that’, but sometimes it’s not that easy.” (Pakeha, 17-18)

A third of the women felt that other factors could get in the way of practicing safe sex including alcohol use and,

“You can get too caught up in pleasure and intimacy to use a condom”

“ If not in a stable relationship they may be too shy to suggest it.”

(focus group)

IF YOUNG MEN SHOULD TAKE MORE RESPONSIBILITY FOR STOPPING STIs, WHAT WOULD HELP ?

Educate and Help us

Generally young men feel that if there was more information, “*More education programmes and more awareness in schools*” (Maori, 19-20) they would be likely to take greater responsibility for preventing STIs.

Those aged 19 – 20 would prefer that this information is fairly sophisticated:

“For me seeing a doctor scared me off, because it is the boundary below the waist, makes it scary. What would make it easier, probably, because I feel ‘Woo, what are they going to do?’, they could make more information on procedures, what happens, what’s going on. Like how far in the probe goes and stuff.” (Pakeha, 19-20)

whereas those aged 15 – 18 years felt that shock tactics are desirable.

“Maybe have ads on TV like the drink / drive sort, so you can see the consequences, how you get them and how bad you’ll feel.” (Asian, 17-18)

There was some feeling that contraceptives should be more widely available, and amongst 15 – 18 year olds, that condoms could be free.

“There should be free condoms and stuff.” (Maori, 15-16)

Women Agree – Make it Free

Women also felt that increased availability of condoms and information was the answer. They also felt discussion groups “like this” were helpful. One woman felt it might improve the situation if schools encourage young men to:

“Learn respect for women and visually show (young people the) results of unsafe sex.”
(focus group)

IF THEY THINK THEY MAY HAVE BEEN EXPOSED TO INFECTION, OR HAVE AN INFECTION, WHERE WOULD THEY GO FOR HELP?

Mostly Doctors and Family Planning

- A Medical Doctor is the person that about two in five young men say they would consult if they should need to check out the possibility of infection.
- About a quarter of young men say they would consult Family Planning, or the STD / Sexual Health Clinic.
- About one in ten young men would approach their friends, and a similar number would talk to somebody in their family, usually a parent.
- A small number of men said they would seek help either from a telephone agency like Youthline, or from their partner.
- Women identified the same help agencies as the men. Doctors and Family Planning were preferred by the majority. Counsellors and Youthline were also trusted sources of advice. Only two thought young men would turn to parents for help but about a third thought men might go to their 'mates'.

WHAT WOULD PUT THEM OFF GETTING HELP, AND WHAT WOULD MAKE IT EASIER?

Shame is a Big Problem

About half the comments indicate that shame and embarrassment, the fear of how others will respond, the possibility of being laughed at and stigmatised, are the primary barriers to a young man seeking treatment for an STI. Mostly this fear is expressed in terms which indicate that much of the embarrassment is felt to be personal, it is a burden which is imposed by one's own feelings.

"Men feel ashamed to have an infected penis, because the penis is so much, worth so much for them. To a man it means power." (Asian, 17-18)

However for some men the fear is felt to be driven by external pressure, in other words the possibility of others making a decision to actively persecute somebody who has an STI.

"They're being scared of what they might have or getting hassled for having an infection." (Maori, 15-16)

The need for guaranteed confidentiality mentioned by a small group of men is no doubt aimed at preventing this possibility. These men feel that somehow the news will leak in a way they cannot prevent.

"People should realise that everything that happens is totally confidential, especially at the sexual health clinics. The doctors deal with this all the time. They're not going to go into the next room and laugh about it." (Pakeha, 17-18)

Two thirds of the women thought that what would mainly put men off getting help is embarrassment or shame. The greatest fear predicted was embarrassment in front of peers, but they expected anxieties about parents finding out and facing doctors and clinics.

Remove the Mystery

Men feel that more information is the best means of making it easier to get help. There is an interest in clinics publicising their services, providing information about what they do, the procedures they follow, and the probability of successful treatment. There seems a real desire for reassurance:

*“Going to a STD clinic, I would have heaps of apprehension about – you just hear horror stories!”
(Pakeha, 19-20)*

“You really need someone to talk to so that they can go ‘Nah, it’s alright’ so it will make you feel better.” (Asian, 15-16)

“It would probably make it easier to get help sort of knowing that things can be cured, that there is a chance to get things back on track, you’re not going to be cursed with this STD for the rest of your life, hopefully.” (Pakeha, 15-16)

Women similarly felt it all needed to come out in the open much more so it could be talked about and STIs would not carry such a “*taboo*”. More information openly publicised could explain confidentiality, let people know they are not alone and also let them know where they can go for help.

“The stigma – if you have a STI you’re going to be all ‘Yuck!’, so the stigma has to go. I think that would make it easier for them to get help if they want it.” (Maori, 19-20)

Women also felt confiding in a trusted friend to support you or go with you would be a good idea.

PART SIX: ACCESS ISSUES

WHAT GETS IN THE WAY OF MEN GETTING THE KNOWLEDGE, SERVICES, MATERIALS AND SKILLS THEY NEED?

This is Really Embarrassing

More than a third of young men say that embarrassment and shyness, shame and pride, are the major barriers to their access to learning and other resources. Right through the age groups, there is a desire for more openness in both schools and families.

Some men say that either they don't know where to go to get what they need, or that the materials and knowledge are not available anyhow. Related to this is the feeling that cost is a problem

“There are these help lines to ring up but I don't think many people know about them. Sure we sort of talked about that kind of stuff, but no-one actually thinks of ringing up.”
(Asian, 19-20)

Some men mention attitude as a problem. They may not be able to take these issues seriously, finding them to be a bit of a joke. Or more likely, they may find motivation to be difficult, as they are not interested in doing or learning anything on the topic. Related to attitude there is a feeling amongst some men that methods of learning are not interesting enough.

“Just need information in your face so that it's always there and it becomes more of a reality than a joke. Posters and pamphlets.” (Pakeha, 17-18)

“Probably most guys don't think about that kind of stuff, They're not interested. They don't go out of their way just to find out information.” (Maori, 15-16)

“The library's always a good place but the problem is that you get book that are definitely a bit out of date.” (Pakeha, 15-16)

Overall, amongst men aged 15 – 18, a lack of self-responsibility appears to be a significant barrier to accessing both learning and resources.

Women reflected the same concerns, especially embarrassment and pride or “being too staunch.”
“It's not cool.”

Women also suggested that the attitudes of their parents or religion might get in the way.

WHAT WOULD IMPROVE THIS?

Information and Attitude

Most of the comments recorded suggest that young men want there to be a general increase in awareness and learning and an overall change in attitudes. Women whole-heartedly agreed with this.

“I guess it’s a social thing, the attitude surrounding some issues. You talk about it among your friends, but in the background there’s this big macho rugby thing going on. And as much as we’re in the nineties, it’s still quite closed in some areas. Especially some communities, I mean like especially Asian communities – the more traditional ones. Needs a greater awareness I guess.” (Asian, 19-20)

The favored place of learning appears to be school. There is an interest in schools providing more information, and in having this made available at a younger age. A few comments suggest that it would be good to have outsiders with some specialist ability coming to the school and talking to classes. A number of the women liked the idea of mobile health units visiting schools but also thought it would be good to have these topics talked about openly in class at least each year. One woman mentioned *“More sexual education classes from enthusiastic and outgoing teachers.”* (focus group)

Advertising of various kinds, including pamphlets and posters, is rated almost as highly as the school as a favored place for providing information. Women added that it was important to advertise openly where places were that you could get more help and information.

A really important change that young men would like to see is a shift in attitudes. What they are looking for overall is a new kind of open minded culture, a context where people have more *“relaxed views”*, and are less *“uptight.”* (focus group)

“It would improve if we had a more open-minded culture or made it illegal for people to preach to other people not to have sex before marriages!” (Asian, 17-18)

This would be a place where it is okay to talk about sex more often, where people are *“more caring”* (Pakeha, 15-16) and it is acknowledged that young people are having sex.

“And education for parents too somehow. In my school it was just they were under the assumption that the students at this school don’t have sex, which is quite scary.” (Pakeha, 17-18)

“People don’t know that sexuality is alright. They aren’t aware of their sexual presence, that they are sexual beings.” (Pakeha, 19-20)

Part of this would include learning about sexual wellness. The women too, reflected strong feelings about the need to be able to talk to someone safely about issues – either confidentially, or, preferably, openly with parents and friends.

Finally, there is a need for contraceptives to be more readily available to young people. Partly the underlying issue here is shame, its not easy for young men to front up to the chemist and buy a packet of condoms.

“A lot of people are still embarrassed to go and purchase condoms. So if they were free more young people would use them.” (Maori, 19-20)

WHERE DO YOU GO WITH CONTRACEPTION AND STI ISSUES?

There are a great variety of different places that young men and women suggest information can be sought from. In order of mention these are:

- Medical Doctors and the Hospital
- The Family Planning Association
- Auckland Sexual Health Services / STI Clinics / The Burnett Centre / CAB
- Parents and the family generally
- The Chemist
- Television/Videos
- Books/Magazines
- Youthline/Rainbow Youth

Women also felt the school nurse was a good idea.

Generally speaking increased age co-relates to greater awareness about there being a variety of options in this regard. Family Planning is usually only talked about by those aged 17 or more, and the specialist sexual health clinics and community services mostly are only know by those aged 19 or more.

“I would probably go to my GP or to Family Planning. Those are the only places that I know, if there are any others then I’m not aware of them.” (Pakeha, 15-16)

PART SEVEN: GAY YOUNG MEN

DO GAY MEN NEED DIFFERENT INFORMATION?

There is a roughly even divide for both male and female respondents between those who feel that gay men need to be taught different stuff, and those who think they do not.

“They at least need an aspect that could be devoted to them.” (Pakeha, 15-16)

Topics, which are seen as relevant for specialist teaching to gay men are:

- The ways in which relationships and sex are different for gay men.
- The problem of being more emotionally at risk.
“Gay youth are a lot more at risk, more psychologically and emotionally, they need a lot more awareness.” (Maori, 19-20)
- Safety issues regarding sexual health, including the risk of HIV
“Gay men are more prone to getting STIs, HIV and stuff.” (Maori, 15-16)
- Gay men’s identity and their communities. (Pakeha, 19-20)
“There’s also the issue that’s not so much related to sex, but identity - and coming out and self-esteem is a major issue with gay men.” (Pakeha, 17-18)
- Anal Sex.

Those young men who feel that gays do not need to know anything different, suggest the following reasons for that:

- Both gay and straight need to know about safe sex.
- Knowledge about gay sex could be made generally available to all.
- The only information that gay men may not need to know is “stuff about women” (Maori, 15-16).
- Both gay and straight people may have anal sex
“So many straight people are engaging in gay sex or having anal penetration with their girlfriend, and they may still be unaware that it’s dangerous.” (Pakeha, 19-20)

Women had very little to say on this issue but supported gay men getting any specific information they might need while expecting that most needs would be the same: *“All information is about being safe and protecting yourself.”* (focus group)

Resources need to be related to *both* gay and straight youth:

“You talk to a lot of gay men and they thought condoms were a heterosexual thing ‘cause that’s what they’d been taught. Condoms go on the penis and the penis goes in the vagina...and you know that it is fine because that’s what the video said.” (Pakeha, 19-20)

SHOULD EVERYBODY BE TAUGHT THE INFORMATION FOR BOTH STRAIGHT AND GAY PEOPLE?

Sexuality is a Common Concern

Virtually all the responses suggest that young men would like to have access to information about both gay and straight sexuality. All women (except one who was unsure) felt *everyone* should get *all* the information.

At least a third of the women made additional comments why they felt this was so important. They wanted to ensure that 'closet gays' also had free access to information without having to 'come out' before they were ready. They also reflected a compassionate concern for their fellow students:

"It's important to know how (the gay students) are getting by."

"We do not want to alienate the gay community."

A small number of comments suggest that straight men would get some but not all of the information about gay issues. One suggestion on this theme is that issues of sex and sexual health could be combined, whereas 'stuff around gay communities' could be discussed separately. One woman also suggested a group solely for gay people to meet and talk to other couples.

"I think it should be on an option basis, there are still a lot of primitive people out there who will not take kindly to being told the details of a gay person's life." (Pakeha, 15-16)

Suggestions that support combined learning on this issue generally highlight the need for mutual understanding. There is an interest in "*getting rid of the misconceptions about gay sex*" (Pakeha, 17-18) and "*developing an understanding brought out into the open*" (Asian, 19-20) because "*everybody needs to understand what's going on.*" (focus group)

"My straight friends have a lot of misconceptions about gay sex, like that we all have anal sex all the time and do nothing else and that's the only reason why we're gay... well, we don't all do that." (Pakeha, 17-18)

Moreover there is a need to cater for bisexuals and men, currently straight, who will become gay in the future –"*who knows what will happen later in life.*" (Pakeha, 19-20)

Only one young man suggested that homophobia is a problem. (Pakeha, 15-16)

DO GAY YOUNG MEN NEED DIFFERENT SERVICES?

For Gay Guys its even Tougher

About three in five comments by men indicate that services *do* need to be different for gay men. Gay doctors and teachers could be helpful. (Pakeha, 17-18) Two thirds of women agree. There is some mention of the need for support groups, which recognise the different, and more demanding, emotional experience of gays. In other words, gay men '*need a bit more of a support system than the straight guy,*' (Pakeha, 15-16) they need "*more services that deal with the emotions that gay men face.*" (focus group) Women added that this would be especially so for 'closet gays' and those who were insecure.

Also worth noting is a number of comments which indicate concerns about whether or not gay men will be able to gain access to service providers who can both competently deal with their issues, and do so without prejudice. One man suggested that:

"it's not fair because they aren't treated fairly because they are gay." (focus group)

Roughly two in five men and women believed the same services need to be provided for both gay and straight men, generally emphasising a belief in the sameness of issues and experiences.

ARE ISSUES ABOUT SEXUAL HEALTH DIFFERENT FOR GAY AND STRAIGHT MEN?

- About two thirds of comments from men suggest that sexual health issues are different for gay and straight.
- Most women also noted that there are some differences.

WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENCES?

The main differences commented on concern different risk factors around exposure to STIs generally, and HIV in particular. Gay men are believed to be more prone to contracting these diseases.

The main difference talked about is that gay men do not need to be concerned with pregnancies, and therefore perhaps don't need to learn about contraception. However one woman commented that we should still all understand about each other and another woman pointed out that people's sexual orientation could change.

Emotional differences received some comment, especially the difference in feelings that gay and straight men experience, and the need for different support networks. Also talked about were the different forms of sexual practice engaged in by gay and straight men.

Men aged 15 – 16 generally didn't know about any differences.

PART EIGHT: YOUNG WOMEN'S VIEWS

HOW DO YOUNG WOMEN REACT WHEN MEN TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR CONTRACEPTION OR SAFE SEX?

We'll Share it but Not Give it Up

Most women responded very positively to the idea of men taking responsibility:

"I'd be shocked but happy, because it's about time."

"Impressed; it shows the guy cares about you. If they do it properly they're trustworthy."

"Shows he's mature, responsible and serious about these issues."

Possibly reflecting some insecurity about whether or not men are capable of being trustworthy in this area, two thirds of the group still felt they would want to share the responsibility because:

"It's good to be extra careful – women should be cautious as well."

One women even felt she would get *"stressed out and end up getting into an argument"* if her partner took over this role. (focus group)

DO YOUNG WOMEN THINK IT IS A GOOD IDEA FOR MEN TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY ?

Young women are certainly keen for men to be more responsible. However the responses here were very like those in the previous question and may indicate that women have taken on responsibility for their own safety and health to such an extent that it is difficult for them to imagine relinquishing this control again. It may be that this form of self-care has had an empowering effect on young women that the are happy to share but not give up.

There is also a possibility that these responses reflect a deep distrust in their male peers' ability to be reliable and responsible.

HOW WOULD YOUNG WOMEN LIKE YOUNG MEN TO BEHAVE ?

There were six main themes to the desires of the young women :

- Show respect
- Be understanding, kind and caring
- Communicate and share decision-making
- Slow down and don't pressurise
- Show maturity
- Take more responsibility (this includes being knowledgeable)

The women did not contribute any ideas of what might be stopping men behaving in these desirable ways.

WHAT WOULD ENCOURAGE YOUNG MEN TO TAKE MORE RESPONSIBILITY ?

Look into Your Future!

There was a strong emphasis from the women toward encouraging more education of men - particularly looking at the outcomes of their attitudes and behaviours. One woman suggested being able to talk to people who had made mistakes in the past by not taking responsibility. Related comments include:

“Show them the consequences before it happens.”

“Encourage them to take risks more seriously and know more.”

More than half of the suggestions involved increased communication for young men including with parents, teachers, friends, girlfriends and youth support centres like Youthline. Peers were seen as valuable resources to encourage young men to be responsible, and see this sort of behaviour as ‘cool’.

One respondent said men might be more responsible *“If there was a prize.”* Although this sounds like an outrageous suggestion it perhaps points to the needs for more positive role modelling by fathers and other adult males, perhaps even in films and media, to present the ‘rewards’ of a responsible life rather than the typical glorification of wild rebellious lifestyles.

WHAT DO WOMEN THINK YOUNG MEN WANT IN THE AREAS OF SEX, SEXUALITY AND RELATIONSHIPS ?

There were fewer responses to this question than to others, but they reflected opinions mentioned in previous sections:

- *“Good sex.” “To get their thrills.”*
- *“To be happy and satisfied with their sexuality.”*
- *“To feel cool and fit in with their friends.”*
- *“A good relationship.”*

WHAT DO WOMEN THINK ARE YOUNG MEN’S WORRIES AND CONCERNS IN THE AREAS OF SEXUALITY AND RELATIONSHIPS ?

Again these reflected other sections:

- How to be sexually satisfied
- Being good enough and able to satisfy a partner
- Fear of rejection

COMMENTS ON CURRENT AND FUTURE STRATEGIES FOR YOUNG MEN.

The women were not very satisfied with the current strategies being used. They felt young men needed to know a lot more. One suggestion was that these issues are introduced to men when they are even younger. There were a number of requests for much greater resourcing in this area especially in information pamphlets available in schools, education programmes, and group work.

PART NINE: POTENTIAL INITIATIVES

LIABLE PARENT PROVISIONS – DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THIS?

- Aside from a resounding chorus of ‘no’ only three men said they know about liable parent provisions, and two men said they know ‘a bit’ about it. Among the women it was the same, only one had ever heard about these.

WHEN SHOULD YOU FIND OUT ABOUT THE LIABLE PARENTS PROVISIONS?

Generally young men want to find out about liable parents provisions as soon as possible, meaning before they become sexually active. This is especially true of those aged 19 – 20.

“Let them know when they’re young, probably before they make mistakes.” (Pakeha, 19-20)

Men aged 17 – 18 however tended to put some emphasis upon learning in the 3rd and 4th form, and some of those aged 15 – 16 tended to feel that knowledge about liable parents provisions can be left until “*you get into trouble.*” (focus group)

Women varied widely in when they thought this would be appropriate. Answers included: “*As soon as possible.*”, “*During Intermediate sex talks.*”, “*Third, fourth ...*” or “*Fifth form.*”, “*Now would be good.*” and “*When pregnant.*” (focus group)

WOULD KNOWING ABOUT IT EFFECT A MAN’S DECISION ON BECOMING A FATHER?

Young men are very much evenly split between those who feel that knowledge of liable parents provisions would effect their timing of fatherhood, and those who feel it would not. Those for whom timing would be effected, often mention finances as a significant issue:

“Yes definitely. If you didn’t you’d think you could get away with it and not worry about the child’s upbringing. Could make you delay having a child until you were more financially secure.”
(Maori, 15-16)

“Yes it would have some influence especially those who want to be prepared. It would affect most young men.” (Pakeha, 17-18)

Those who would not be affected, suggest a variety of reasons for this. A few young men feel that the conception of children is a woman’s responsibility – “*some chicks just have the baby without it being the guys decision.*” (Asian, 15-16) Others suggest that knowledge in itself will not make a difference.

A few of the men who felt that knowledge of liable parents provisions would not affect their wanting to become a father indicated that they could only anticipate that children are always planned and wanted. They said they would “*always support a child anyway,*” “*if you want to become a father you do.*” (focus group)

Most women suspected this knowledge would affect men by encouraging them to think about the repercussions of irresponsible behaviour, and that they can’t get away with thinking “*it is not their problem if they get a girl pregnant.*” (focus group)

COULD KNOWING ABOUT IT CHANGE BEHAVIOUR?

About two thirds of comments indicate that young men would probably change their behavior if they knew about liable parents provisions:

“Yes definitely. You’d be thinking about how to support it and your life being tied to one person and a baby and how you would bring it up – you’d be stressed out.” (focus group)

Potential changes that might ensue would be increased use of contraception, and a move from short-term to long-term relationships. Most women thought men would think twice about irresponsible behaviour and that they may become more responsible and careful.

The one third of men who feel that behavior would not be affected suggest two main reason for their response. Firstly, the link between sex and pregnancy is, at least in the heat of the moment, somewhat tenuous:

“I don’t think they’d change. I think when young men have sex, pregnancy is the furthestest thing from their minds.” (Pakeha, 17-18)

. Secondly:

“if they are not scared off by an STI, nothing will, if they are going to do it they will” (focus group)

One woman was sceptical that even this threat would make any significant difference:

“They probably wouldn’t change – men are too selfish to understand fatherhood.” (focus group)

WHERE CAN YOU GET CONDOMS FROM AND HOW MUCH DO THEY COST?

By far the most widely know place where you can get condoms is, according to young men, the Chemist. In order of significance, places mentioned include:

- The Chemist
- The Family Planning Association
- Petrol Station
- The Sexual Health Centre, and STD Clinics
- Prescription from the Doctor
- Bars and Night Clubs
- Toilets
- Rainbow Youth

Young women’s three most common choices also mentioned Family Planning, but also emphasised the school nurse and supermarkets and shops. Other suggestions were chemists, doctors, friends and Youthline. Price is not widely mentioned. The most well known deals are:

- \$10 - \$12 for a dozen
- \$3 for 90 at Family Planning
- \$3 for more than a hundred at the Doctors

ARE FREE CONDOMS A GOOD IDEA?

- The resounding answer from both men and women was an almost totally unanimous, Yes – definitely!
- One man expressed some ambivalence about the trade off between fewer STIs, and the possible fact of “*jumping into bed a bit early.*” (Asian, 19-20) One woman also had this caution that it may increase the pressure to have sex.

“You should always have some on you just to make sure because you can’t rely on the pill or anything else.” (Pakeha, 15-16)

WHO SHOULD GET THEM, AND WHERE FROM?

About two in five young men would like to see condoms made available to virtually everybody who wants them, although those aged 19 – 20 were more likely to want availability made conditional according to place and age. Most young women felt that anyone who was sexually active should be able to get them.

“Anyone who is sexually active.” (Pakeha, 19-20)

Places mentioned where they could be made available include, in order of significance:

- Schools
- The Chemist
- The Doctors
- Places where young people ‘hang out.’
- The Family Planning Association
- Nightclubs

The idea of having condoms in schools is especially attractive to 15 – 16 year olds, while those aged 17 – 18 were more likely to suggest anywhere.

One young woman suggested getting condoms from a parent, but mostly the women agreed with the men that the best sources were probably school, chemists, doctors and Family Planning.

“People who need them should get them, people having sex. They should be easier to get.”
(focus group)

SUMMARY OF THE OPINIONS OF YOUNG MEN

When asked what it was they hoped for or wanted in the field of sex, sexuality, sexual health and relationships, most young men identified the search for a good relationship as their highest priority and main goal.

They identified a relationship as something longer-term and meaningful, and giving stability, companionship, friendship and sex. For some this also had a future orientation with thoughts of eventually settling down with someone special and possibly marriage and children.

They showed particular interest in the emotional experiences involved in the intimacy of a relationship, especially 'love' and being able to care for another person. Intimacy was seen as involving complete openness of communication, acceptance and sharing.

There were also some real fears for men in the field of relationships and intimacy. The four areas that arose were

- feeling inadequate due to inexperience, lack of knowledge or lack of confidence;
- worry about being rejected, not accepted, not fitting in, fear of being alone and feeling ashamed about that
- needing freedom to learn, experiment and develop their sexual identity
- coping with the practical and emotional expectations of relationships
-

They were concerned about things like managing relationships through difficult times, enhancing intimacy, dealing with emotional upsets and finding ways to talk through things openly. How to deal with ending relationships also worried them, and coping with rejection.

A number of men indicated their awareness of great differences in the way men and women see things, including sex, and that lack of mutual understanding could lead to upset. Men seemed to find it difficult to imagine getting it all working successfully: "How do you have a relationship and sex at the same time?"

Sex was the next biggest issue for young men and tended to often be talked about as a completely separate issue to relationships, as if seen as an end in itself. The three areas that emerged here that these men wanted were: physical pleasure / "really great sex", safe sex and avoidance of STIs and unwanted pregnancy, and knowledge.

Although there were high levels of concern about disease, many men felt they didn't have adequate information, access to condoms, confidence or experience to practice safe sex reliably. They were also aware that alcohol use and "getting carried away" were risks.

There was quite good knowledge of where you could go for help if you suspected you had contracted a STI, but shame and embarrassment were primary barriers to making use of them.

Direct concern about the possibility of getting a woman pregnant was fairly low and didn't really seem much of a reality to them. When they considered whose responsibility it was to protect against pregnancy virtually all men thought it was ideally both partners, but some felt the man was really the one who should take on this role. Despite that, a number suggested that in reality often the female would take the responsibility to ensure safe sex practices.

In considering their futures only about half the young men had even thought about fatherhood. Those that do, tend to be clear they do not want this to happen until they are ready. Being mature (probably in their mid-twenties or early thirties), having a strong stable relationship and being in a steady job with a satisfactory income were considered good pre-requisites for fatherhood. Ideas about parenthood were gleaned from their family and social contexts, particularly their own fathers.

Despite all this, most young men are aware that there are risks due to accident or carelessness and this can lead to an unplanned pregnancy and other health risks. The majority had some anxiety about their ability to avoid this.

The sense of not having a great deal of control over themselves was evident.

The issues of unplanned parenthood or abortion were frightening to young men and they felt there was no knowledge or experience provided to prepare them for such difficult scenarios. If the situation arose they felt they would like to have a say in the decision, but would probably ultimately accept the woman's choice.

It was seen as preferable to get sexual experience with a number of different partners, yet promiscuity was seen by a number of the men as too wide-spread. A number of problems were seen as being caused by young women being too sexually provocative, promiscuous, immature or inexperienced.

When asked how they made decisions about the right time to have sex most relied on their own feelings and 'intuition' about whether it felt right. Many felt they have to read a woman's body language or interpret her responses to judge if it is okay to proceed. Quite a small proportion actually discussed this openly with a partner and they were more likely to have established a relationship with that person already, and know them well.

Young men knew of a number of places that they could get information about issues related to sexuality including school sex education classes, doctors, Family Planning, Sexual Health clinics, community services, the media (television, videos, magazines, pornography and the internet), friends, family and through personal experience with partners.

School was the main source and most men felt there was a real increase in knowledge available in schools now but that the content and delivery could be improved. They felt a lot of the information just "scratched the surface" – not going deeply enough into issues and not covering a wide enough range of topics. For them (especially the younger respondents) there needed to be more fine technical detail about sex itself, how to satisfy a partner, how condoms work and real risk factors especially to do with health issues. They also felt school programmes didn't deal well with exploring feelings and relationships. "Don't just teach us to say no, teach us about decision making and how to do it safely".

There was, for some, discomfort about talking about some issues with teachers and peers. Options suggested were group discussions where contributing was optional, so you could just listen in, or bringing in specialist educators. Outside people and media sources allowed some anonymity to deal with sensitive topics. They would like more publicity about good places to go for advice and assistance.

Whatever the source, the men defined that the people involved needed to be trustworthy, accepting, respectful, non-threatening and non-judgmental.

A really important change that men would like to see is a shift in attitudes to something more open-minded, where it is acknowledged that young people are sexual. Being able to talk freely about issues as they had in this study was seen as extremely valuable.

SUMMARY OF OPINIONS FROM GAY MEN AND ABOUT THEM

There was general sense throughout the study that there was a particular need in this area for much more openness and acceptance. Gay men themselves felt they were not sufficiently visible or acceptable.

In discussions about resourcing youth there was a recognition that although most issues relating to sex, sexuality, health and relationships are shared by gay and straight people, there are some areas where gay youth could have needs for extra support and information.

Specialist support could address health needs, including HIV risk; the ways sex and relationships are different for gay men, gay male identity and their communities and the particular emotional risks. It is recognised that gay men may have different and more demanding emotional issues to face within relationships and in the community.

In normal school programmes that address sexuality it is frequently found that same-sex issues are not included. Same sex issues are not just relevant to openly gay youth as, in their teens, young men may be 'closeted', bisexual or unsure of what their sexual orientation will end up to be.

Having groups that covered *both* heterosexual and homosexual themes was generally considered to be the best option as it was widely felt that it is important for everyone to understand the experiences of *all* their peers so those who are 'different' in any way are not isolated, and can, instead, be supported.

This was also recognised as valuable so any negative stereotypes could be addressed, making more youth more tolerant and better educated so they could support their peers in any situations of prejudice or special need.

SUMMARY OF YOUNG WOMEN'S OPINIONS

It was clear from the start that the young women in our study were concerned about the levels of understanding, the attitudes and the behaviours of the young men in their peer groups when it came to issues around sexuality and relationships.

The women felt that many men had as top priorities the selfish pursuit of pleasure and looking good in the eyes of their mates. They were very aware of the differences between the attitudes of young men and their own. There were some comments on how men seek physical pleasure through relationships while women are often looking for a more caring, communicative experience.

When looking at young men's attitudes to sexual health, protection from STIs and unwanted pregnancy there were many comments from women that the men did not seem to think much about these things. Some felt men tended to believe they were somehow immune to misfortune and therefore didn't worry about the potential consequences of their actions. The result of this is that many young men do not make the effort to gain knowledge on these topics.

The women expressed a need for a great deal more education for men, and for men and women together. Areas they stated as needing more coverage were anatomy and sexual functioning, health risks, contraception and where to get help and information when they need it.

They felt it was very important for both sexes to fully understand each other not just how they functioned physically but also emotionally, what they wanted and needed, how they thought. They particularly wanted men to develop better communication skills so there could be more openness and understanding. This might also assist more sharing of responsibility and decision making.

In the sexual realm, women wanted men to learn how to please them and in the emotional realm, how to deal with feelings better, especially anger. There was some indication that, despite having strong views on many areas of sexuality, women were not equal partners in initiating and negotiating sexual encounters. They appeared to expect men to suggest, or even pressurise them for, sex and then it was up to them to agree or resist.

The women thought the school environment was probably the best place to gain such learning, especially if specially trained people could come in and teach the material (although “.enthusiastic and outgoing teachers” were recognised and valued). In schools they liked the ideas of both separate single-sex discussion groups and ones where everyone was together so there could be an increase in men and women understanding each other.

When it came to looking at information and resources for men, women shared their feelings that there were areas that were not being addressed and that many of the topics were not studied with sufficient depth and subtlety.

However, there was further concern that, even if men had access to all the information they could possibly need, they may lack the understanding, motivation, skills or maturity to use put it to use. Some of men’s attitudes were seen as potentially problematic - particularly not valuing and respecting sex, women and sexuality enough, and not having a realistic view of the possible consequences of their actions and need for responsibility.

In relation to safe sex practices for contraceptive purposes as well as protection against STIs women agreed responsibility should ideally be shared. However, even if men took initiative and were willing to take on this role it appears from women’s comments that they would be unlikely to relinquish their own vigilance. This seems to be because they are very aware that the ‘bottom line’ in their health and safety comes down to them and it is likely to be the woman who lives with the consequences of a ‘mistake’.

This same attitude was reflected in discussions on abortion where women felt it should be their final decision what happens to their bodies even though they liked the idea that a couple would discuss choices together.

Women had the same views as men about when was a good time to consider parenthood, but they also emphasised *emotional* maturity and the dangers of having children before you are ready to ‘settle’.

Like the men, the women felt strongly that all areas of sexuality needed to become more open so things like STIs could be dealt with properly without the embarrassment and ‘taboos’. There needs to be more information and discussions in safe, understanding contexts.

SUMMARIES OF OPINIONS BY AGE GROUP

It was very noticeable that there were wide variations in maturity, experience, attitudes and ability to articulate even within each of the age-specific groups. But the general themes of what was important and what they wanted were fairly consistent across the groups.

15-16 YEAR OLDS:

This youngest age group seemed to be the most highly motivated to get knowledge, “plenty of information – you can never get too much”. Even at this age there were some men who desired detailed technical knowledge on sex, contraception and health issues, perhaps this was to fill the gap of having less actual experience.

They talked more about what they would specifically want in a girlfriend emphasising personality and trustworthiness in their desire to “get the best chick”. Along with the desire for sexual experience there was a strong interest in having a girlfriend for fun and companionship.

A number were aware that it was important not to pressurise someone else for sex, though they experienced some pressure themselves.

This was in the anxiety about being a virgin and the possibility of being teased about this and pressured into finding an opportunity to “loose it”.

Some young men objected to the negative, judgmental messages they got about sex and all the associated dangers, and wished for some more positive images of healthy sex.

There was less talk on the issues of image and sexual identity at this age, and more indications of homophobia – although even in this group there seemed quite a tolerance of difference.

When it came to considering how they would like to get knowledge and understanding these men were less comfortable about mixed-sex discussion groups.

There was also a distinct polarity to the approaches they recommended. When suggesting how to improve the use of safe sex practices, to avoid STIs in particular, they suggested shock tactics – including showing young people the horrifying effects of infections.

But when talking about what stops them feeling able to get help with these issues they wanted more understanding and acceptance and reassurance.

There was mention that younger men have less knowledge and access to community health places and often have more practical difficulties actually getting to them.

Sexual health for young men made sense as physical health rather than being linked to relationships or emotional issues.

17-18 YEAR OLDS:

In the middle age group there were more developed ideas of what would make a relationship satisfying. There was more mention of understanding, comfort and caring, and having someone to share with on a deeper level and that will stand by you in difficult times.

This went with more awareness of emotional issues and dealing with feelings, but also more anxiety of what it meant to not be in a relationship and fear of failure in this area and of being alone.

Alongside this were concerns about getting into relationships that were too emotionally demanding and not feeling ready for that.

Those who were interested in deepening relationships asked for much more help with understanding women and what they wanted, how to communicate better with them and how to please them.

In increasing their sexual experience men at this age now considered that encounters should probably be verbally negotiated between the parties even if they felt pretty unprepared to be able to do this. They were also aware that better communication had a lot of potential advantages in creating a satisfying relationship.

With gaining knowledge there was more criticism of school programmes not going deeply enough into issues especially those to do with relationships. There was a more intense need for people to talk to, preferably in a variety of contexts, and perhaps access to good male role models.

Image and “fitting in” were mentioned more, and peer pressure was particularly evident in their concerns.

19-20 YEAR OLDS:

Much of what the oldest age group contributed showed the influence of personal reflection, particularly on their past experiences, from the stand-point of being out of school and more experienced and mature.

In this way they had particular insight into the weaknesses and strong points of the education they had received.

This group were the most positive about learning opportunities combining males and females and felt that should have occurred more at school. They were more aware of the importance, and potential difficulties, of good communication between men and women and felt this, and addressing wider issues about relationships, should have been much more part of ‘sex education’.

They still felt they were seeking more information, particularly specifics, feeling they had only really grasped the basics in the past and there was a lot more to learn.

This group, much more than the others, worried about their performance, not so much now over what their mates would think, but in whether they were sufficiently satisfying their girlfriends. Many seemed to feel they should have more experience than they do. There was also an indication that these men had come across the idea that sex could be a much more sophisticated thing than just straight intercourse, and wanted to get ‘better’ at it, learn other techniques.

These men were able to reflect on, and value, having had time to 'practice' and gain experience with a number of women. Being in relationships is not discussed so much as a goal, though some indicated they were struggling to combine sexual relationships and emotional relationships well.

There was more discussion on the differences between men and women in their needs and values, and more suggested valuing, understanding of, and compassion for, women.

There was increased understanding in areas of sexual identity and more tolerance of difference within this group. They were the only ones who considered that a man's sexual preference may not be fixed or clear and that gay men may be more at risk practically in the community, as well emotionally and psychologically.

They also reflected on issues like the peer pressure at school and how negative and unhelpful it had been in their attempts to learn and experiment in the ways that were right for them. Yet some were still finding social pressure to be sexually active.

In the social arena this was the only group that mentioned friends taking some responsibility for each other and, to some extent, policing unsafe sexual practices.

Some of the men implied a need for good male role models and an awareness that their own fathers may not be the best. There was also more consideration of the community's responsibilities in educating and keeping it's youth safe.

In the practicalities of sex this group indicated the most negative view of the use of condoms, at least among their peers, mostly around their disruption of pleasure. One man openly admitted his own take-it-or-leave-it practice. This may indicate that education practices have improved over the last few years and have encouraged young people to take this issue much more seriously.

All the age groups had some people that mentioned alcohol as a disruptive influence when it came to safe sex practice. This group was the only one that also mentioned the use of drugs, and this having a similar effect. They were also the only ones to mention pornography as a source of learning about sexuality.

In general this group were better informed on the techniques and risk factors of contraceptives and condom use and were more aware of relevant, specialist resources in the community.

There was also a mention of a 'holistic' approach to health that would go beyond the purely physical and include emotional and spiritual health.