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Key highlights from the CSDS-KAS Report 'Attitudes, anxieties and aspirations of India's youth: changing patterns'

Exactly a year ago, the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) in partnership with Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS) conducted a sample survey-based study on the attitudes, anxieties and aspirations of India's young population aged between 15 and 34 years, the detailed findings of which are being released today in the form of a report. The CSDS-KAS Youth Survey 2016 was conducted in 19 States of the country among 6122 respondents in the age group of 15-34 years. The last such joint survey by the two organisations on India's youth had been conducted ten years ago in 2007. Ten years is a long time, long enough at least for many economic, political, socio-cultural and technological changes to have taken place in a country. To sum up the changes very briefly, economically, the Indian economy continues to liberalise and grow at a rapid pace and has come to acquire the tag of the world's fastest growing economy. Politically, the last decade, especially its latter half, has been rather tumultuous with India witnessing a major anti-corruption movement that spawned the rise of a brand new political party, and a landmark national election in 2014 that fundamentally changed the nature of the regime ruling the country. Socio-culturally, there have been frequent conflicts between the forces of conservatism and liberalism on various issues such as women's rights, minority rights, decriminalising homosexuality, censorship and freedom of expression, and more recently on the issue of growing intolerance in society. On the lifestyle front, there has been a proliferation of the mall, multiplex, and café/restaurant culture across Indian cities and towns which have radically changed the way urban Indians spend their money and their leisure time. Lastly, tremendous advancements in the world of communications and networking technology in the last ten years have also drastically transformed the way we live, communicate and consume information. Mindful of these significant developments in India over the last one decade, CSDS and KAS felt the need of conducting another round of survey of young Indians in order to measure the continuities and changes in their attitudes and practices that may have taken place. The study also aimed at understanding the social and psychological well-being of young people. It was felt that it is important to know the mindsets of youngsters, the opinions they hold with respect to key socio-political issues and their anxieties and insecurities, because if the expectations of this growing mass of youth (two-thirds of India's population is aged below 35 years and one-third falls in the age group 15-34 years) are not addressed on time, then the disappointments of this burgeoning population could translate into social unrest and even violence.

The survey was conducted using a standardised questionnaire which was administered face to face at the residence of the respondents. In each of the 19 States where the survey was conducted (Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Gujarat, Haryana, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal), the questionnaire was translated in the local language that is understood by most people of the state.

Broadly, the survey focused on the following eight themes -

1. Job profile, job preferences and career priorities
2. Opinion on Reservations
3. Political participation and political attitudes
4. Social and cultural attitudes
5. Attitudes, preferences and practices with respect to marriage
6. Lifestyle and habits
7. Anxieties
8. Experiences of discrimination

Here are some of the key highlights -

Job profile, job preferences and career priorities

- Employment is the prime concern of young Indians. When asked in an open-ended question what they thought is the most important issue facing India, a plurality (18%) said it is jobs and unemployment. About 12% said economic inequality and 9% said it is corruption.
- The occupational profile of India's youth seems to have undergone a significant change over the last one decade, with a third (32%) of the country's youth reporting their main occupation as 'student'. This figure is up by a whopping 19 percentage points since 2007, when a mere 13% respondents were reportedly pursuing their studies.
- Compared to Upper Caste youth, it was found that Dalit and Adivasi youth lag far behind when it comes to access to education. While over two-fifths of Upper Caste youth (42%) reported themselves as students, only about one-fourth of Dalit youth (25%) and a mere one-sixth of Adivasi respondents (16%) said they were pursuing their studies. Moreover, compared to 69% of Upper Caste youth, only 41% of youth from Dalit and 20% from Adivasi communities were found to have completed college education.
- About 10% of Upper Caste youth reported themselves as either professionals or government employees. This is two times more than OBC, Dalit and Muslim youth (5%). Meanwhile, Dalit youth are nearly twice as likely to be engaged in low paid unskilled work as Muslim and OBC youth (9% as opposed to 5%). An overwhelming majority of Adivasi youth are engaged in agriculture and allied activities (58%).
- If one discounts the proportion of youth still studying, agriculture emerges as the largest employer of India's youth. Agriculture was found to employ about one-fifth (18%) of India's youth, up by four percentage points since 2007. About two-fifths (39%) of these youth are agricultural workers, working on other people's lands to earn their wages.
- An overwhelming majority of India's youth (65%) would prefer a government job, if given a choice. Setting up one's own business came a distant second (19%), followed by a job in the private sector (7%). The appeal of a government job has in fact increased slightly over the last decade. In 2007, in response to the same close-ended question, 62% of the youth had said they would prefer a government job.
- The survey asked respondents to indicate which kind of job would they give most priority to – a permanent job even if it means drawing a little less salary, a job with an opportunity to work with people of their liking, a job with good income in which one doesn't have to worry about money, or a job that gives them a feeling of satisfaction. 33% of the youth accorded the greatest priority to having a permanent job, even if it means drawing a little less salary. Job satisfaction came a close second (26%), followed by a good paying job (22%). Interestingly a good paying job is much less preferred today. In 2007, 35% had expressed their preference for it on being asked the exact same question.

Opinion on Reservations

- There is fairly strong support among India's youth for existing reservations for SC-ST and OBCs in government jobs and educational institutions. 48% gave outright support to SC-ST reservations in government jobs and only 26% were completely opposed to it. Meanwhile 46% support SC-ST quotas in educational institutions and 28% are opposed to it.
- With respect to the reservation policy for OBCs too, more youth support than oppose it. 45% completely support OBC quotas; both in government jobs and educational institutions, and 30% oppose them.

- A greater proportion of youth among all castes and communities, barring Hindu Upper Castes, were found to be in support of the existing SC-ST and OBC quotas than opposed to it.
- The pattern of greater support than opposition to quotas can also be seen with respect to extending reservations to SC-STs in private sector jobs; however the degree of support for this idea is less than that offered to the existing public sector reservations for the two communities. Overall 41% youth supported this idea (fully or somewhat) and 38% opposed it.
- The idea of extending reservations to OBCs in private sector jobs, however, does not find widespread support. 38% youth were found to be in support of it and 42% opposed to it.
- The same is true for the proposal of extending reservations to Muslims in government jobs. More youth are opposed to it (41%) than in support of it (35%). In fact, this idea found approval only among Muslim youth (60%) and to some extent Dalit youth (49%).
- The economic background of a young person belonging to a beneficiary group seems to matter in how they view the issue of reservations for their community. Youth belonging to economically well-off sections within SC-STs, OBCs were found to be slightly more opposed to reservations for their community than those who are less well-off within these communities. Only on the question of Muslim reservation is this pattern not seen. Muslim youth belonging to the upper and middle classes were more approving of the idea of extending reservations to Muslims (on grounds of backwardness) than their co-religionists from the lower class.
- Even as India's youth largely tend to support than oppose for the idea of reservation, there is also a desire among them to go beyond caste as the only basis of reservation. When asked whether reservations should be only on the basis of caste or only on the basis of economic status or whether they should be scrapped altogether, two in every five youth (40%) preferred to have economic status as the criterion. While one in every seven (14%) said it should continue to be on the basis of caste, about one in every ten (10%) wanted both caste and economic status to be the basis. Only 17% wanted the entire policy of reservation to be scrapped altogether.

Political participation and political attitudes

- Close to half of the Indian youth (46%) have no interest at all in politics. 18% had little interest in it, 25% have some interest and 7% have a lot of interest. At a normative level, interest in politics was not too high as only about half of them (51%) had an interest in it. At the same time, it is encouraging that interest in politics among the youth has steadily risen over the last two decades. In a 1996 CSDS study, 37% youth had interest in politics which has increased by 14 percentage points over the years.
- The proportion of respondents interested in politics was found to be 31 percentage points higher among college educated youth (56%) as compared to non-literate youth (25%). Also, young men are more likely to be interested in politics (55%) as compared to young women (42%).
- Interest in politics was found to be least among youth from the metros/biggest cities of the country where more than half of the respondents (53%) said that they had no interest at all in politics.
- 37% of youth from upper class households had interest in politics as compared to only around a quarter (26%) of the youth from poor families.
- More than half of the eligible young voters (54%) said that they had voted in every election and close to one-fifth (19%) said that they have voted in many elections. Only around one-tenth of the respondents reported that they had never voted in any election. As compared to the 2007 Youth Survey, there has been a four percentage point decline in non-voters and a nine percentage point increase in those who said they had voted in every election.

- The survey found limited participation of the youth in campaign activities of political parties. Less than one-fifth (18%) of the youth said they had attended an election meeting (18%). 16% said they had attended a rally. Meanwhile, only about one-tenth of the respondents had done door to door campaigning (9%) or engaged in the distribution of leaflets and posters (8%).
- The study examined party identification among the youth by asking them if which political party they liked the most. Only around half of the Indian youth (52%) identified themselves with any party. One-fifth (20%) of the respondents said that they were fond of the BJP. Support for the Congress was exactly half as compared to the BJP – 10%. 4% of the youth were fond of socialist parties (JDU, JDS, RJD, INLD, BJD, and SP), 2% liked Left parties (CPM and CPI), 2% preferred Dalit parties (BSP, RPI-A, LJP, and VCK), and another 2% preferred parties whose founding principle was combating corruption parties (AAP and Loksatta). 13% of the respondents were found to be fond of other regional parties. These include parties like the AIADMK, DMK, Shiv Sena, TRS, TDP, JMM, SAD, NCP, AITC etc.
- One-sixth of the youth (15%) said that they had participated in a protest and demonstration in the last two years. This figure was much higher at 27% among youth engaged in some business. Professionals, government employees and skilled and service workers were also found to be relatively more likely to take part in protests. Participation in protests was found to be relatively lower among youth engaged in agriculture (14%) and unskilled labour (17%). Only a small fraction of students took part in protests and demonstrations as per the survey. Less than one-sixth of the students said that they had participated in a protest in the last two years.
- More than a quarter (26%) of the respondents said that they had participated in activities organised by a student organisation in the last two years. Not participating in activities of student unions should not be considered as disillusionment with student politics or unions at large. Only one-fourth of the youth (25%) supports a ban on student unions. A plurality of the youngsters (46%) believed that they protect the rights and interests of students. This sentiment was even stronger among college students from both government colleges (55%) and private colleges (61%).
- The survey found fairly high participation of youngsters in activities of farmer organisations (23%) and trade unions (20%) as well.
- Associational activity does translate into participation in protests and demonstrations. More than one-fourth of the youth (27%) associated with at least one of these four – political parties, student unions/organisations, trade unions and farmer organisations, had taken part in a protest/demonstration. On the other hand, less than one-tenth (7%) of those without any associational activity had taken part in a protest.
- Around half of the respondents (53%) said that, in the last two years, they had never hesitated in stating their views on a political issue. Yet, there are reasons to worry as around one-fourth of the youth (23%) said that they had hesitated in expressing their opinion on a political issue.
- More than half of the Indian youth (53%) feels that people have become less tolerant about listening to views of others. This indicates that the popular claim about rising intolerance in the country is also shared by many youngsters. Personal experiences tend to shape perception of individuals. We find that youth who claimed that they had hesitated in expressing their opinion on political issues were slightly more likely to believe that tolerance had decreased. Almost six out of ten (59%) respondents who had hesitated agreed that people had become less tolerant as compared to only around half (53%) of those who had never felt hesitant. Youth from religious minorities like Muslims and Sikhs were more likely to agree that people have become less tolerant.
- In the study, we also ascertained the youth's opinion on contentious issues which have been at the centre stage of the ongoing debate over liberty and progressive beliefs - banning of movies which hurt religious sentiments, beef consumption and death penalty. We find that six

out of ten respondents (60%) supported banning movies which hurt religious sentiments. Close to half of the youth (46%) object to allowing beef consumption. Around half of the youth (49%), support the status quo on capital punishment. These figures clearly indicate that most youngsters remain averse to progressive beliefs on political issues.

- Muslim youngsters were largely in favour of abolishing death penalty as around half of them (47%) agreed with the given statement. Sikhs and Christian youth were least supportive of abolishing death penalty as only around one-fourth of them agreed with the statement.
- Hindu youth are slightly less likely than others to support a ban on films which hurt religious sentiments (59%). Among other religious groups, there is almost equivalent support.
- Expectedly, we find sharp differences on the issue of beef consumption. More than two-thirds of Muslim (69%) youth considers beef consumption to be a personal choice and opposes any objection to it. On the other hand, only 31% of the Hindu youth and 33% of the Sikh youth seem to concur with this view. However, among Hindus, whether one is a vegetarian or a non-vegetarian makes a significant difference to their opinion on this issue. Non-vegetarian Hindu youth were twice as likely as vegetarian Hindu youth to support consumption of beef, 40% as opposed to 20%. Quite interestingly, young supporters of Left parties were highly liberal with respect to this matter. 90% of them have no problems with beef consumption. Supporters of regional parties and the Congress were relatively less liberal (50% and 40%, respectively) on this matter. AAP and BJP supporting youth were least liberal (35% and 23%, respectively).
- Respondents were asked to rank multiple identities - state, caste, religious and national identity based on how proud were they about holding them. While a majority of respondents (51%) said that they were most proud of being Indian, it is interesting to note that almost an equal proportion of respondents prefer other identities like - caste (13%) religion (14%) and region (11%).

Social and cultural attitudes

- A majority of young respondents (51%) agreed (strongly or somewhat) with the proposition that wives should always listen to their husbands. Two in every five (40%) disagreed with it and about one in every ten (9%) did not answer the question. Moreover, two-fifths of the youth (41%) were also in agreement with the proposition that it is not right for women to do a job after marriage. Interestingly, and worryingly, a fairly high proportion of young women respondents also held such conservative views. About one in every three young women were of the opinion that women should not work after marriage and over two out of every five of them favoured the idea of an obedient wife.
- After taking into five questions probing youth attitudes towards women, we found about a quarter (24%) of the young respondents to be very patriarchal and only one in six (18%) to be not patriarchal at all. The remaining youth fall somewhere in the middle - 29% were somewhat patriarchal in their views and another 29% were less patriarchal than that as they held conservative responses on only a few questions.
- When asked about their opinion on the issue of same-sex relationships, three in every five (61%) young respondents considered a love affair between two men as wrong, one in every ten (10%) considered it somewhat right and only one in every seven (14%) considered it right. Similarly, with respect to a love affair between two women, 61% of youth considered it to be wrong, 12% considered it somewhat right and only 14% saw nothing wrong with it.
- Around one-third of the Indian youth (36%) still considers inter-caste marriage to be completely wrong. About a quarter (23%) saw them as being partially right, and only one-third fully approved of them.
- Close to half (45%) were found to be completely opposed to inter-religious marriages and only 28% were in complete support of them.

- Two-thirds (67%) of youth did not approve of live-in relationships.
- Over half (53%) were opposed to dating before marriage with only about one in every seven approving of it.
- Two in every five (40%) were opposed to the celebration of Valentine's Day
- The survey tried to measure the extent of discriminatory attitudes or prejudices among Indian youth. This was done by asking the respondent several questions that tried to ascertain his/her discomfort level about having a person from another religion, caste, region, race, and with a different dietary preference as a neighbour. Overall, after taking answers to seven questions into account, one in ten (9%) Indian youth were found to be very discriminatory, another one in ten (10%) to be somewhat discriminatory, about a quarter (25%) to be low on discrimination and 56% to be not discriminatory at all. The most discriminatory attitudes among youth were found to be towards people who drink alcohol, people who cook non-vegetarian food and couples who live together outside of marriage.

Attitudes, preferences and practices with respect to marriage

- The importance given by young Indians to marriage has declined. Time series data shows a noticeable shift. In the 2007 survey, 80% had said that in life it was important to get married. In the 2016 survey only 52% so.
- In the last one decade, the proportion of young married adults has decreased by eight percentage points. In the 2007 survey, a little over half of the youth (54%) were found to be married. In the 2016 survey, this reduced to 46%.
- The reduction in proportion of married youth has taken place among both young men and young women. While 48% of 15-34-year-old men were found to be married in the 2007 survey, in the 2016 survey the share of young married men was just 39%. Similarly, the proportion of young married women in the same age group declined from 61% in 2007 to 59% in 2016.
- While the decline in the proportion of married youth is visible across localities, it has been more pronounced in rural areas than in urban areas. In 2007, in rural areas over three-fifths (61%) of the 15- to 34-year-olds were married. In 2016, this had dropped by nine percentage points to 52%. In urban areas, there has been a six point decline in the proportion of married youth, from 46% to 40% in the last decade.
- Acceptance of inter-caste marriage has increased by 24 percentage points, from 31% in 2007 to 55% in 2016. However at the same time the reported outcome of inter-caste marriage (married respondents who said their spouse is not from their caste) was found to be only 4%.
- The survey found 84% or over four in every five married youth to have had an arranged marriage, compared to a meager 6% who have had a love marriage. 4% reported as having had a love cum arranged marriage
- One-third of youth who had a love marriage were found to have married someone outside their caste. On the other hand, 97% of arranged marriages were found to be within caste.
- Married youth who had a love marriage were found to be more open-minded than marriage youth with an arranged marriage. Not only were they less opposed to inter-caste and inter-religious marriage, they were also less opposed to live in relationships, pre-marriage dating and same-sex relationships.
- Similar to the married cohort, among the unmarried too, preference for arranged marriage is high with 50% of the young unmarried cohort opting to have their parents take a decision regarding their life partner. Preference for love/self-marriage accounts for 12% and about one

in ten (10%) would prefer a love cum arranged marriage. Roughly one-fifth (19%) had not yet made up their mind on the kind of marriage they would like to enter into and if at all they would like to get married.

Lifestyle and habits

- 65% of 15-34-year-olds were found to be living with their parents. About 31% were found to be living with their spouse, and the remaining 4% were staying either with a friend, in a hostel, or alone. While a greater proportion of younger youth, not surprisingly, were found to be living with their parents than older youth, what is interesting is that 33% of young people aged between 30 and 34 years, and a similar proportion of married youth, also reported living with their parents.
- Indian youth seem to be quite conscious about how they look and appear. 61% said they are very or somewhat fond of wearing stylish clothes, 58% reported being fond of wearing stylish footwear, 59% are quite fond of keeping the latest mobile phones, 41% have high to moderate fondness for buying perfumes and deodorants, 39% said they like applying fairness creams quite a lot, and 36% reported a high or moderate degree of fondness for visiting beauty parlors and salons.
- Overall, 19% of the youth were found to be very style conscious, 23% to be moderately conscious, 25% to be not much conscious, and about 33% to be not conscious about style at all. Youth aged between 18 and 21 years (mostly college-going youth) were found to be the most style conscious (51%) followed by those aged between 15 and 17 years (mostly school-going youth) at 48%.
- 33% of the youth reported watching a movie in a cinema hall regularly, that is, either once a week or at least once a month. About 30% regularly visit a restaurant or hotel or café. Meanwhile 28% of the youth reported going to a shopping mall regularly. Urban youth, not surprisingly, were found to be doing these activities much more, particularly those residing in big cities.
- There seems to be a connection between youth's style consciousness and the frequency of their outdoor leisure activities. While only 5% of those who never go to a shopping mall were found to be quite style conscious, the figure of high style consciousness among those who do so regularly was seven times more at 37%. Similarly, regular visitors to restaurants and cafes were also seven times more likely to be highly style conscious than those who never visit restaurants.
- 87% of the youth reported eating green vegetables often, that is, either daily or a few days a week. 73% said they eat fruits often. About 30% of the respondents said they drink fizzy drinks like Coke and Pepsi often, and 24% reported having 'junk' food such as burgers and pizzas frequently.
- In terms of physical activity, 35% reported playing a sport often (in the 2007 Youth Survey the corresponding figure had been about 15% only) and 31% said that do some physical exercise either daily or a few days a week. All these habits were found to be more prevalent among youth belonging to middle and rich classes than those from less privileged backgrounds, among youth belonging to younger age groups than older, among young men than young women, and among youth living in big and small cities compared to villages.
- Smoking cigarettes and consuming alcohol do not seem to be very prevalent among Indian youth; at least they did not report doing so. 75% of the respondents said they have never smoked a cigarette and 77% said that they had never drunk alcohol. The survey found smoking cigarettes and drinking alcohol to be more prevalent among older youth than younger ones, youth belonging to less privileged backgrounds and those residing in rural areas.

- Youth belonging to households in which a household member drinks alcohol were found to be five times more likely to drink alcohol than youth in whose house no family member drinks (46% as opposed to 9%). Youth in whose house someone smokes were found to be nearly four times more likely to smoke than youth in whose house nobody smokes (40% as opposed to 11%).
- 12% of youth who do not worry at all were found to smoke compared to 23% of those who worry a lot. Similarly, 14% of the youth with no anxieties were found to be drinking alcohol compared to 19% of the highly anxious youth.
- The survey found a majority of Indian youth (18-34-year-olds) to be non-vegetarian (58%). 30% said they were pure vegetarians and 9% described themselves as eggitarians.
- 50% of the young respondents were found to be not exposed to social media at all. It was found that these respondents had never used any of the 'popular' social media platforms, be it Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp or YouTube. The remaining 50% were found to be exposed to social media but in varying degrees with high usage of these platforms being only about 8%.
- When the survey was conducted in April-May 2016, 75% reported having never used Twitter, 62% had never used YouTube, 54% had never used WhatsApp and 51% had never been on Facebook. In terms of daily usage, WhatsApp was used most (30%), followed by Facebook (25%), YouTube (11%) and Twitter (7%). Even though these figures of usage are not all that high, they have however sharply increased compared to 2014. In a 2014 survey conducted by CSDS during the National elections, only 6 percent of the 18-34-year-olds had reported using Facebook on a daily basis and 82 percent had reported having never used it. Meanwhile, daily Twitter usage among the youth at that time was also extremely low at just one percent and no usage of Twitter whatsoever had been very high at 96 percent.
- Among those who said that they took selfies regularly, 62% found to be very exposed to social media. Meanwhile among those reported that they never take selfies, only 2% were found to be highly exposed to social media.
- 81% of the youth reported owning a mobile phone in the survey - while 43% had a smartphone, 38% had a feature phone. This proportion is over two times more than the figure of mobile ownership recorded in the 2007 Youth Survey - 34%.
- Personal computer and laptop ownership among the youth has also increased in major way in a decade. While only 8% youth households owned a computer or a laptop in 2007, the figure recorded in the 2016 survey was 24%, a three-fold increase.
- Even as ownership of these gadgets has gone up, the survey found that access to the internet on them is quite low. 30% of the youth who owned a personal computer or laptop did not have access to internet on it. Meanwhile 58% of those with a mobile phone had no access to internet on it. Overall, the survey found that 64% of the youth had no immediate access to the internet whatsoever.
- 57% of the youth watch news on TV regularly, that is, either daily or a few days a week. About 53% read newspapers regularly and only about 18% read news on the internet regularly. Both TV News viewership and newspaper readership has gone up among youth compared to 2007. A decade ago, about 49% youth were regular newspaper readers and about 48% were frequent TV News viewers. However, given the exponential growth of the News Media sector in India in the last decade, the 4-point rise in the readership of newspapers and the 9-point increase in viewership of TV News among youngsters should be viewed as being modest.
- The survey found India's youth to be quite religious. About 78% of the respondents reported praying quite often (either regularly or sometimes). 68% said they go to a religious place of worship frequently. 49% reported watching religious shows on television quite often. 46% often engage in activities such as singing religious songs, bhajans or taking part in satsangs.

46% reported keeping fasts either regularly or sometimes, and finally 39% said that they read a religious book quite often.

Anxieties

- During the survey, respondents were asked 14 questions related to anxiety. These questions probed their worry levels regarding employment, education, personal health, parents' health, personal looks, marriage, maintaining family traditions, family problems, losing a friend, English-speaking skills, sexual harassment, road accidents, mob violence and terrorist attacks. Taking the responses to all these questions into consideration, we constructed an Index of Anxiety. We found over half (55%) the youth to be highly anxious and another one-fourth (26%) to be moderately so. Only about one in every seven (14%) were found to be not too anxious, and just 5% showed no anxiety at all.
- While on the whole India's youth come across as being highly anxious, some age-groups within them are more anxious than others. 18-21-year-olds, for instance, seem to be the most anxious of all. Overall, three out of every five of them (61%) reported high levels of anxiety. This is higher than the extreme worry levels seen among other age brackets - 57% among 15- to 17-year-olds, 58% among 22- to 25-year-olds, 51% among those aged between 26 and 29 years, and 47% among 30- to 34-year-olds. In fact, anxiety peaks at the early age of 18-21 years and then drops thereafter as the young grow older.
- The survey found anxiety among youngsters to be more prevalent in urban areas than in rural areas and more particularly among those residing in cities, and further among those in big cities. As opposed to 87% youth in big cities who reported high or moderate anxiety, youth in smaller cities showed slightly lesser anxiety at 85%. Youth in villages were found to be relatively least anxious. Three-fourths (76%) of them reported feeling anxious.
- The survey found youth from economically better off backgrounds to be more anxious. High anxiety among youth belonging to the upper class was found to be 12 percentage points more than high anxiety among youth who are poor. Education too seems to significantly impact anxiety levels. Graduate youth were found to be two times more highly anxious than non-literate youth. They were also one and a half times more highly anxious than youth who had completed only primary education.
- When each of the 14 items that went into constructing the anxiety index was looked at individually, parents' health emerged as the matter that the young in India worry most about (87%), followed by their own health (83%). Family problems and maintaining family traditions are also matters of high anxiety for the Indian youth (82% and 77%, respectively) followed by anxiety about jobs (73%) and one's looks (69%). Matters that cause least worry to them are sexual harassment (35%) and quite surprisingly, marriage (38%).
- 12% or about one in every eight 15-34-year-olds reported feeling depressed very often. 8% said they very often felt lonely, 5% admitted to feeling worthless very often and about 3% reported getting suicidal thoughts very often and another 6% said get such thoughts sometimes.
- After taking into account youth responses to questions on frequency of depression, loneliness, worthlessness and suicidal thoughts we found about 7% of India's young to be suffering from high emotional distress. About one in every four youth (24%) fall in the moderately distressed category, 18% in the low distress category and over half of them (51%) reported no emotional distress whatsoever.
- Both anxiety and distress seem to have an impact on each other. About 10% of the highly anxious were found to be highly emotionally distressed as opposed to only 2% of the least anxious youth. Similarly, the greater the level of emotional distress, the more likely are youth to be anxious. Three in every four or 75% of those with high emotional distress reported very high anxiety levels as opposed to just 44% of those who showed no distress whatsoever.

- Our analysis found high emotional distress to be particularly high (at least double the overall average) among those youth who drink alcohol, those who smoke, those who have put out an advertisement for marriage, those who regularly use social media, those who are extremely religious, those who are fond of visiting beauty parlours or salons, those who had a love marriage, and young working women, especially those who are single.
- 31% of the highly emotionally distressed youth were found to be drinking alcohol regularly as opposed to 8% of youth who suffer from no distress at all. Similarly, the higher the distress, the greater the tendency of youth to eat junk food regularly, smoke regularly, be highly style conscious and indulge in shopping and eating out regularly.
- The survey asked the youth whether they had ever consulted a doctor for mental problems. Only about 6% reported doing so, a figure that is alarming given that the survey also finds 55% of the youth to be highly anxious and about 31% to be having high or moderate emotional distress. While it is true (and the survey finds) that the more anxious and the more emotionally distressed are more likely to have consulted a psychiatrist, the figures even among them are alarmingly low. Among youth who are very anxious, only 8% have consulted a doctor; and among the highly distressed only 18% or about one in five have done so.

Experiences of discrimination

- The survey asked young respondents five questions regarding their encounters with discrimination. The questions probed whether they had in a span of five years faced discrimination because of their region, caste, gender, religion, and their economic status. Based on their answers, it was found about 2% had thought to have faced discrimination either on all five grounds or on four of the five grounds. 7% had faced discrimination on two or three grounds and 8% on just one out of the five grounds. This means that one in every six youth (17%) had faced discrimination on at least one count in a span of five years.
- When looked at by age, this figure of 17% increased to 22% among the 18-21-year-olds. Meanwhile, the 15-17-years-olds or those still in school, reported least discrimination (11%).
- The highly educated youth reported having faced discrimination much more than the less educated youth. While 20% graduate youth reported having been discriminated against in some way or the other, among high school pass youth the figure was 15% and among primary pass and non-literate youth it was even lower at 13 and 12%, respectively. It could be argued that the highly educated youth reported relatively greater discrimination because they were in a better position and more equipped intellectually to judge discriminatory practices.
- The survey found economic background and caste to be the strongest grounds for discrimination out of all the five questions asked. Overall, 9% of the young respondents said they had been discriminated against based on their economic status. Whereas 11% of youth belonging to the poorer sections and 9% from the lower class said they had faced discrimination on economic grounds, among youth belonging to the upper and middle classes only 7% said so. On disaggregating the responses of the poor further, it was found that the feeling of economic discrimination was strongest among poor youth who were graduates (18%). It was also quite strong among poor youth in small cities (16%) followed by big cities (12%).
- Overall, 9% of Indian youth reported having experienced caste-based discrimination in the five years preceding the survey. The sense of caste-based discrimination was found to be greatest among young Dalits at 15% followed by young Adivasis (11%) and thereafter Young Muslims (10%). Young Graduates belonging to all these three communities were more likely to report unfair treatment based on caste than the less educated in these communities. 18% of young Dalit graduates, 13% of young Muslim graduates and 10% of young Upper OBC graduates reported facing discrimination based on their caste identity.
- Discrimination on the basis of religion was reported by 5% of all young respondents. Muslim youth were much more likely than others to have reported religion-based discrimination.

About one in every seven or 13% of them said they had been discriminated against based on their Muslim identity. Muslim youth living in smaller cities were most likely to have been victims of religious bias - 27% reported having faced discriminatory treatment for being Muslims. This is double of what all Muslim youth had reported. Muslim youth who reported being highly religious were also much more likely than other Muslim youth to report religious discrimination. A little over one in five of them (22%) said they had experienced religious discrimination. Other categories among Muslim youth who reported relatively higher faith-based discrimination are those belonging to the poor and lower classes, graduate and high school pass Muslims, and Muslim men.

- Discrimination on account of one's state or the region to which one belongs was reported by only 5% of the young respondents. This sentiment was particularly strong among youth from the southern and eastern states who had travelled outside their state and more particularly among youth from Bihar, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh who had gone beyond their state borders. 15%, 14% and 12% such youth, respectively, reported having experienced discrimination outside their state. The survey was not conducted in the north-eastern states (barring Assam) and Jammu and Kashmir; hence we are unable to report their experiences.
- Gender discrimination was experienced by 5% of the total sample, and young women, not surprisingly, were more likely to have experienced it than young men, 8% to 3%. Among young women, the experience of gender discrimination was greatest among those living in the southern states (12%), those who were Dalit and Muslim (10% each) and those in the age bracket of 18 to 21 years (9%).
- The experience of discrimination may be making the youth more emotionally distressed. One in every six (17%) respondents who reported having faced a lot of discrimination also reported high emotional distress. The prevalence of high distress among those who faced no discrimination whatsoever was substantially lower at 6%.
- The survey also found that there is a link between being a victim of discrimination and being discriminatory in attitude. Over one in every three youth (36%) who reported facing a lot of discrimination was also found to be discriminatory in their attitude towards others. This is two times more than the discriminatory attitude witnessed among those who said they had faced no discrimination at all.