

**Abstract** of paper submitted to the IUSSP 2005  
XXV International Population Conference  
Tours, France, July 18-23 2005

**Risk-taking and Sexual Behaviours of the Unmarried  
Male Youth in Rural India**

Hemkhothang **Lhungdim**, Senior Lecturer, IIPS, (Mumbai) and  
Ravi K. **Verma**, Program Associate, Population Council (New Delhi)

This paper examines the likely relationship between risk-taking behaviours and sexual behaviours of unmarried male youths in five rural states of India. The analysis is based on a study (supported by UNFPA) that covered 2910 men between ages 18-40 years from 50 villages in five states, viz. Haryana, Karnataka, Orissa, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. Youth (18-24 years) constitute 29 percent, and from the total youth sample, the unmarried youth comprised of about 49 percent (409 males). Of this, 32 percent of unmarried youth reported to have had penetrative sexual intercourse in the last 12 months. For 65 percent the first sex was with an unmarried woman.

The sexually active unmarried male youth reported first sex at 17.8 years (median age of is 18 years) and only about 17 percent had ever used condom with the last partner, although 85 percent had heard of HIV/AIDS. Also, a higher percentage of sexually active youth in the study engaged in other risk enhancing behaviours such as consumption of alcohol (46 percent as against 16 percent among non-sexually active men), smoking cigarette/bidi (60 percent as against 33 percent among non-sexually active men), charas/bhang (13 percent as against 5 percent among non- sexually active men), and other tobacco items such as gutka/pan masala (56 percent against 33 percent among sexually non-active men). Multivariate analysis confirm the analysis that there is a sub-group of young men who are at more risk than others due to their involvement in a range of risky practices. Risk reduction programs should try and reach this group with more holistic approach to change behaviour rather than simple message of safe sex.