

**"Pre-marital Conceptions in Sri Lanka: Is it a recent phenomenon?"
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Abstract:

This study shows that the incidence of pre-marital conceptions was higher among the first generation with mass schooling (1940-54 birth cohort) than among the last generation of parents without mass schooling (1910-39 birth cohort). The uneducated/less-educated women in each generation had a higher proportion of pre-marital conceptions than the better-educated women in these generations. The better-educated women in the first generation with mass schooling had more pre-marital conceptions than the better-educated women of the last generation of parents without mass schooling but the incidence of pre-marital conceptions was smaller when compared to the uneducated/less-educated women in both generations. By examining the high proportion of pre-marital conceptions, the study suggests that there is a high level of social tolerance for the births conceived before marriage in Sri Lanka. However, the high incidence of pre-marital conceptions for the uneducated/less-educated women whose marriages were parentally arranged suggests that the potential illegitimacy of the children and the social stigma with this was eliminated by subsequently arranging their marriages. In both generations, more than 75 percent of the uneducated/less-educated women who had pre-marital conceptions married before the age of 22 years. All these evidence suggest that the incidence of pre-marital conceptions is not a recent phenomenon in Sri Lanka.