



Exploring the Relationship between
Demographic Factors and Fabric Awareness,
Usage Patterns, and Preferences: A Study in
Urban Areas of India

Anoushka Sethi



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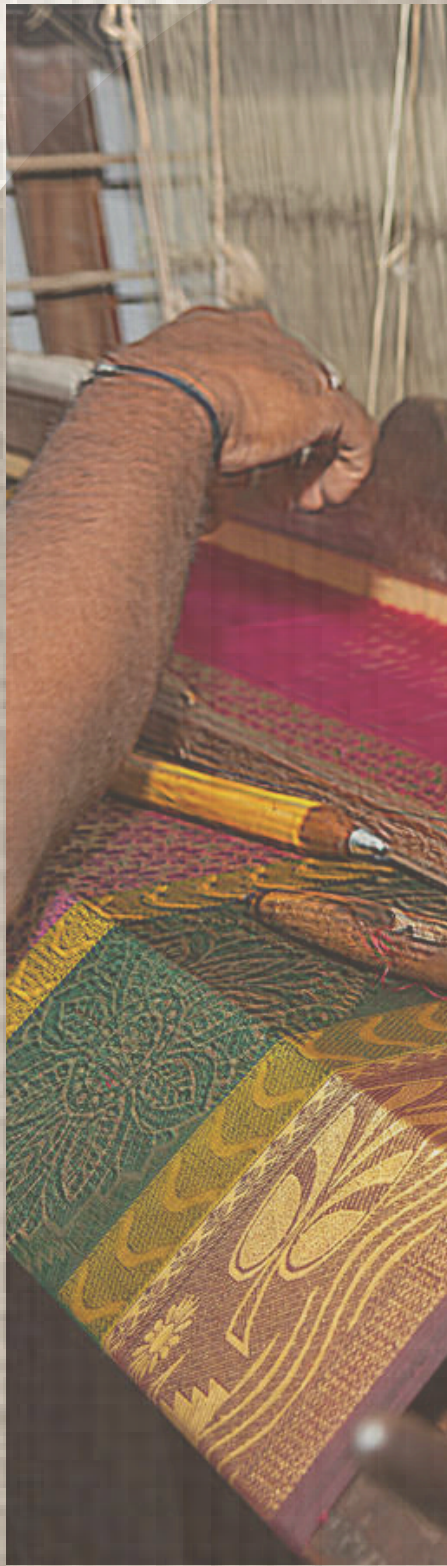
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Link to survey used in this study:

<https://forms.gle/XrZBpYoY43p8bcb8A>



Background and rationale

In today's fast-evolving fashion landscape, fabric awareness and usage patterns are no longer a matter of personal taste but are deeply rooted with broader societal trends. In urban India, where rapid modernization meets traditional values, these fabric choices and preferences reflect the profound insights into cultural identity, economic influences, and consumer behavior. This research paper explores the intricate relationship between demographic factors—like age, gender, income, education, occupation— and the awareness, usage and preferences for fabrics in urban areas of India. By examining how these factors influence consumer choices, the study aims to uncover patterns that offer a deeper understanding of the fabric-related decisions driving India's urban fashion culture.

Social, cultural and historical importance of fabrics in India

SILK



Silk is a symbol of luxury, status and spirituality in India. It is often used in religious rituals, weddings and festivals. The silk saree, especially from regions like Kanchipuram Banaras and Mysore, is a quintessential part of traditional attire for special occasions. Silk production, especially mulberry silk has been an integral part of India's history for over 2,500 years. India was one of the world's largest silk producers during the ancient Silk Road trade, and silk weaving centres, particularly in Varanasi (Banarasi silk), gained global recognition. Furthermore, India is home to various types of silks, like Kanchipuram silk from Tamil Nadu, Banarasi silk from Uttar Pradesh, Patola silk from Gujarat, and Tussar silk from Bihar.

Social, cultural and historical importance of fabrics in India

COTTON

Cotton has been an essential part of India's daily life for millennia. It is often referred to "white gold" due to its widespread use and historical economic significance. Traditional Indian cotton garments like the dhoti, saree, and kurta reflect its comfort and versatility. India was one of the first civilizations to cultivate and weave cotton, with evidence of cotton textiles dating back to the Indus Valley Civilization (around 3300-1300 BCE). Indian cotton was highly prized in global trade networks, including the Roman Empire. During the colonial period, the British exploited India's cotton industry, leading to major socio-political movements like the Swadeshi Movement, where people boycotted British goods and promoted hand woven Indian cotton, like khadi. Khadi is a hand-spun and handwoven cotton, it became the symbol of India's freedom struggle under Mahatma Gandhi. It represents self-reliance, simplicity, and rejection of British economic oppression.



Social, cultural and historical importance of fabrics in India

MUSLIN



Muslin is a finely woven cotton fabric, known for its lightweight and sheer texture. In India, muslin has historically been associated with royal attire and high fashion due to its delicate craftsmanship and airiness. Indian muslin, especially from Bengal (Dhaka muslin) was renowned across the world for its goddamer-like quality. The weave was so fine that it was often referred to as “woven air” or “morning dew”. Dhaka muslin was a major export to Europe and the Middle East during the Mughal period, but its production declined during the British colonial rule due to competition from machine-made fabrics. However in recent years, there has been an effort to revive traditional muslin weaving practices, preserving its legacy as a prized Indian fabric.

How Does Age Influence Fabric Awareness, Usage Patterns, and Preferences

Firstly, age plays a significant role in shaping the relationship between demographic factors and fabric usage. It offers insights towards different generations and their views on fabric usage, driven by factors like cultural values, lifestyle changes, and exposure to global trends. If studied through a traditional versus modern approach, younger generations (20s-30s) tend to gravitate towards fabrics that reflect the global trends and their active lifestyles. They are likely to buy fabrics based on convenience, aesthetic appeal and versatility. While younger consumers have less firsthand knowledge of traditional fabrics and weaving techniques, they are becoming increasingly aware of sustainability and ethical dimensions in fabric production. The Gen Z are under the influence of social media. Influencer culture and movements like the eco-friendly fashion which have sparked an interest in organic fabrics, recycled materials and sustainable textile practises. However this awareness does not always translate into action as fast fashion often dominates purchasing decisions.



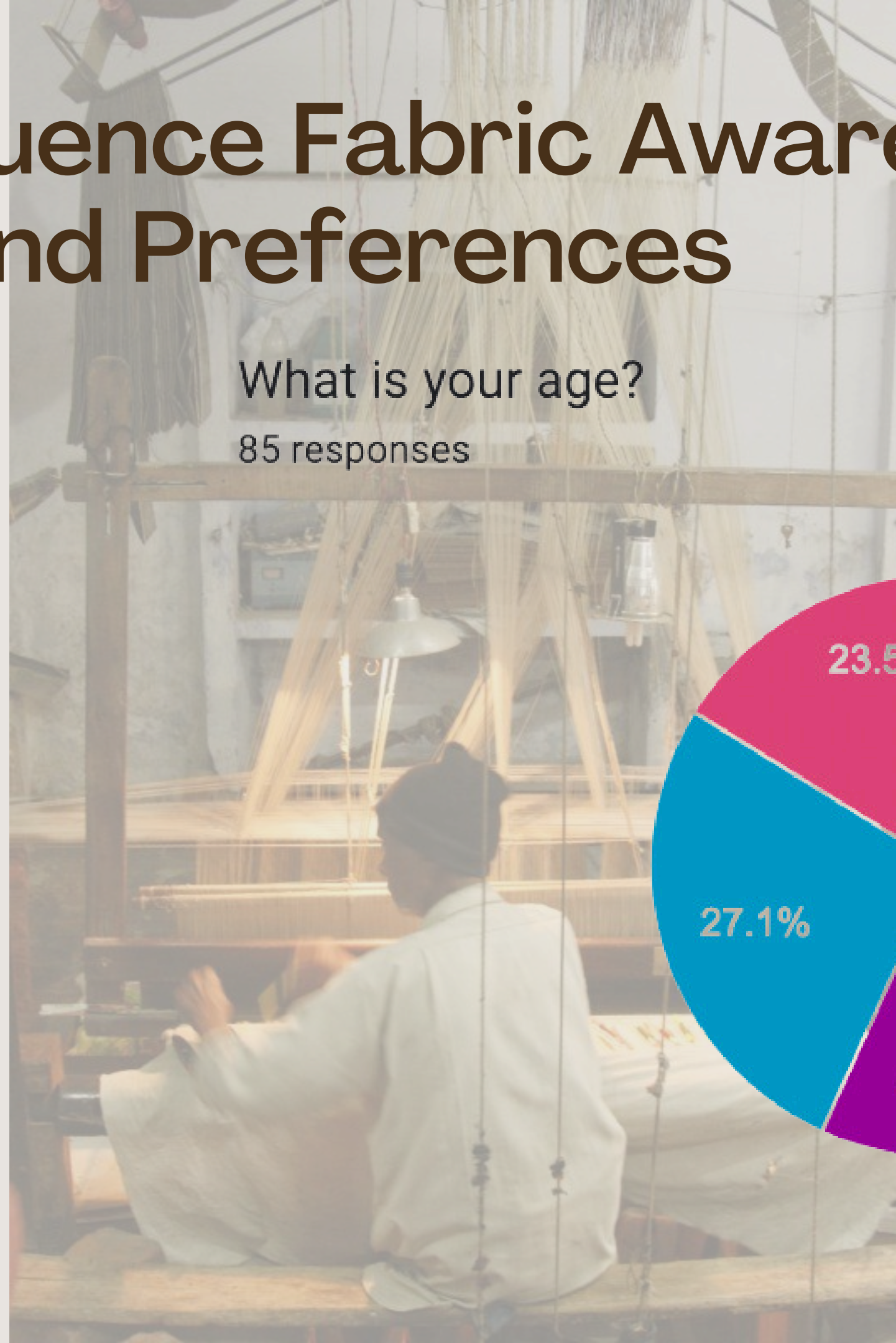
How Does Age Influence Fabric Awareness, Usage Patterns, and Preferences



Their usage patterns lean towards convenience, where wrinkle-free, durable and affordable fabrics dominate like polyester or viscose. Whereas older generations (50+) tend to have a strong connection to traditional fabrics in India like silk, cotton, muslin and handwoven textiles. Many of these fabrics are associated with their cultural identity, heritage, and comfort, often offering garments like sarees, dhotis or kurtas made from these materials. Fabrics like khadi, jute and handloom weaves hold nostalgic value and are often linked to India's pre-independence struggle, making them popular amongst older people. Older adults are generally more knowledgeable about fabric types, traditional weaving techniques and the cultural importance of textiles, therefore having a greater appreciation for handmade fabrics and materials like silk and muslin, often viewing them as high-quality and long-lasting.

How Does Age Influence Fabric Awareness, Usage Patterns, and Preferences

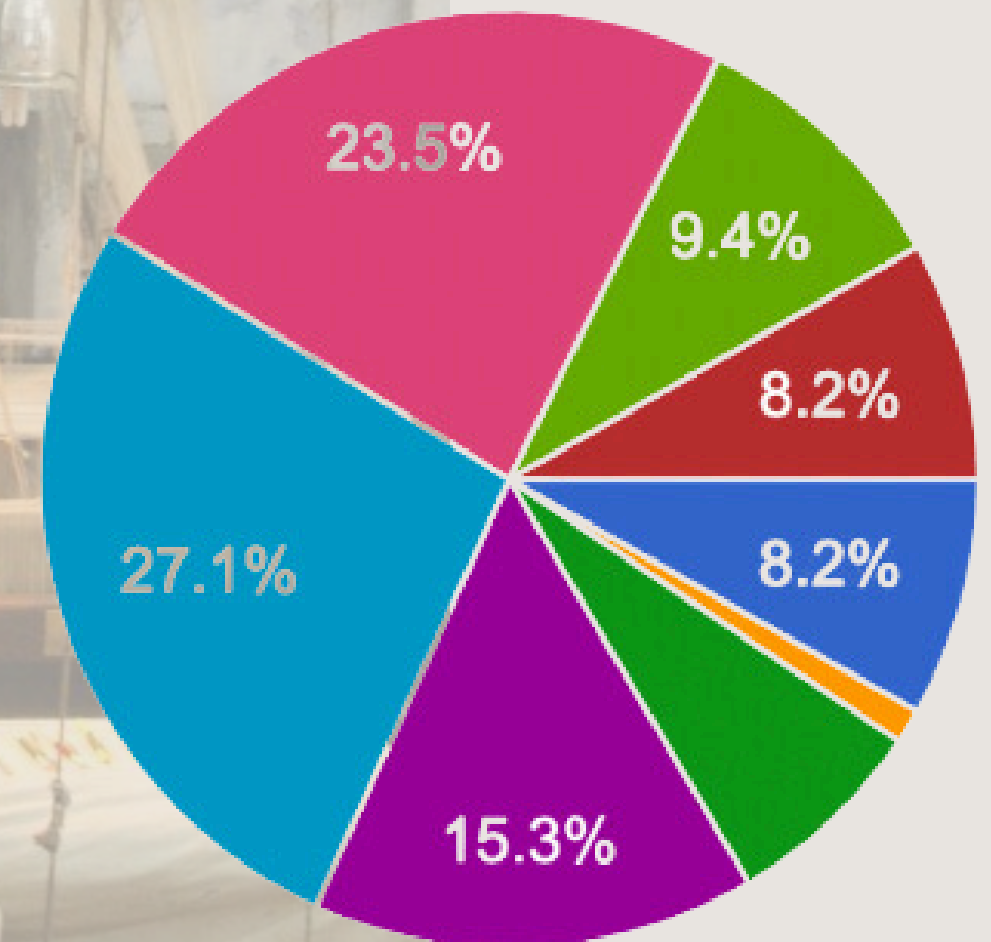
Furthermore, older individuals tend to use fabrics for more formal, traditional wear, especially for occasions like weddings, festivals, and religious ceremonies. Sarees, sherwanis and other garments made from silk, khadi or cotton are commonly worn. Their fabric choices are rooted in cultural and ritualistic practises, making natural, handwoven, or heritage fabrics more common in their wardrobes. Age influences how fabrics are perceived, valued and utilized across different generations in India, the dynamic between the younger and older age groups plays a crucial role in shaping fabric awareness, usage patterns, and preferences in urban India.



What is your age?

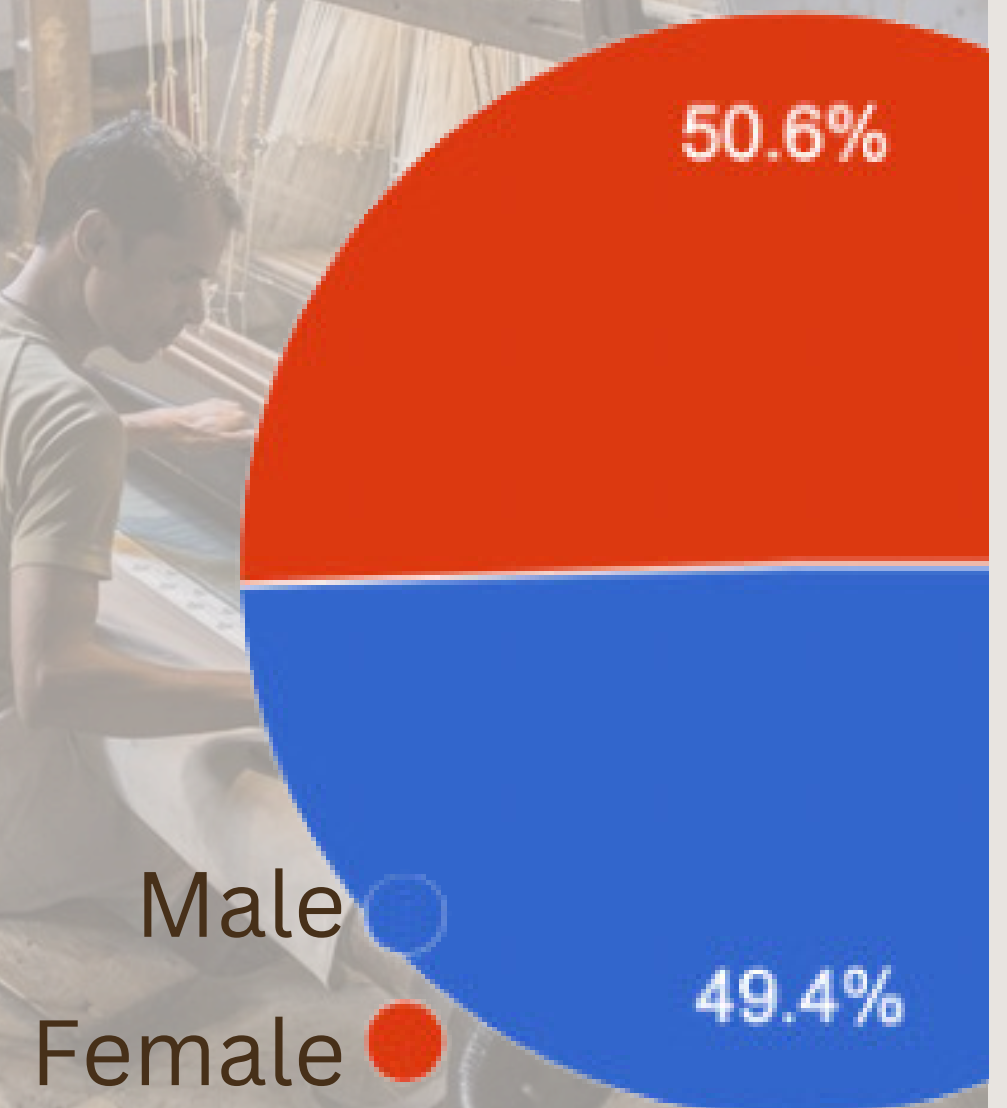
85 responses

- 18-24
- 25-30
- 31-35
- 36-40
- 41-45
- 46-50
- 51-55
- 56-60
- 60+

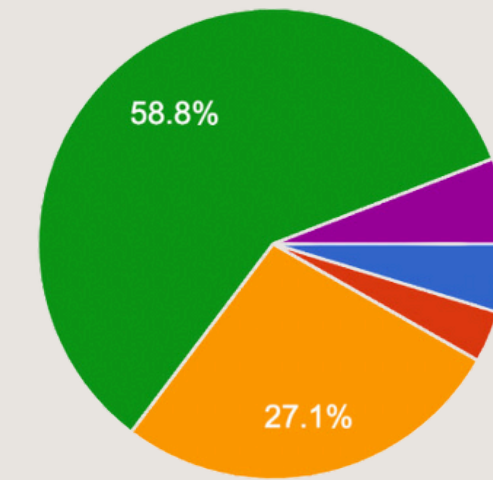


How Does *Gender* Influence Fabric Awareness, Usage Patterns, and Preferences

Women may have a broader range of fabric preferences due to the wider variety of clothing options, while men may prioritize functionality and durability of fabrics. One significant factor influencing these choices could be the development of gender-specific fashion trends. In urban areas of India, women have access to a diverse range of clothing options, so they are more likely to combine aesthetics with comfort (fabrics like cotton, silk and chiffon). Fabrics like these allow to hold traditional attire like sarees and salwar kameez, while also serving purpose in Western-style garments. For men, urban areas in India provide many fabrics (like cotton, linen, polyester blends) which are easy to maintain, comfortable and suitable for the changing climate in India. Although men clothing options are more limited than womens' clothing, the needs are on practicality and durability.



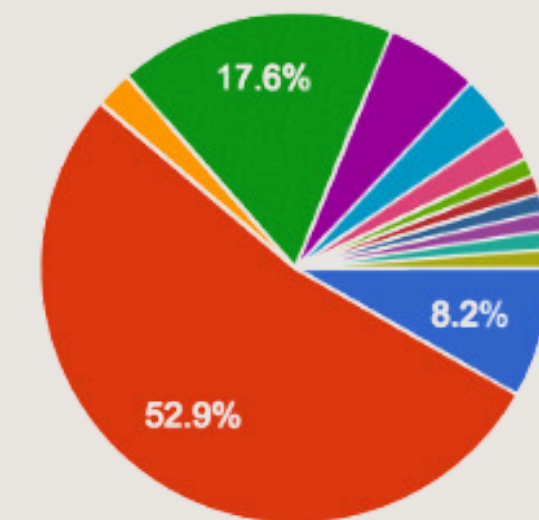
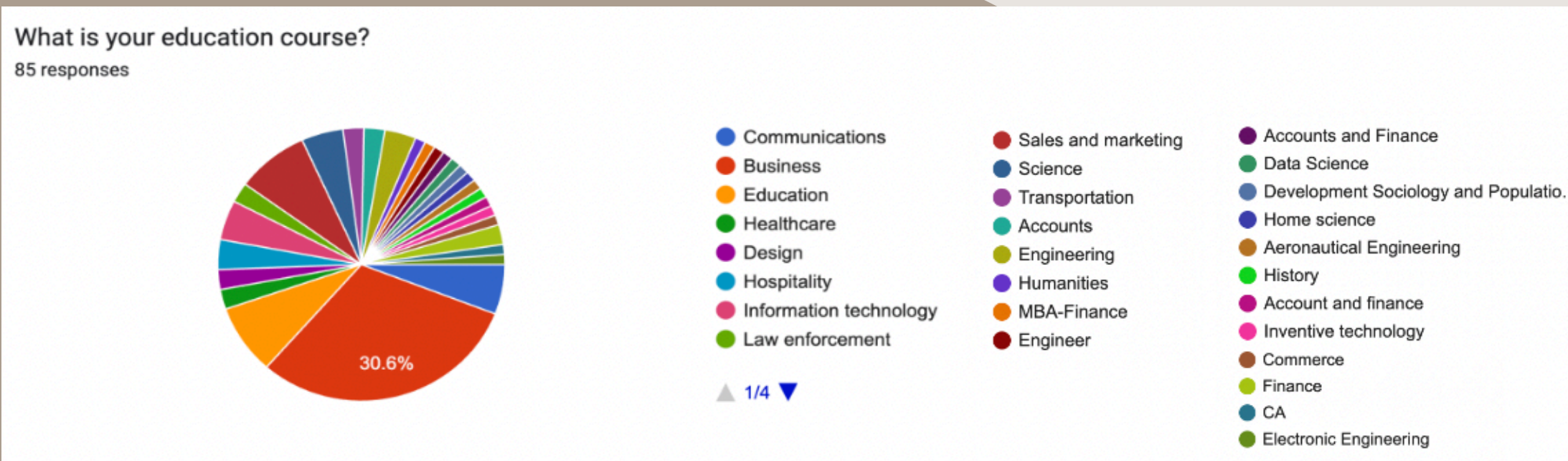
How Does *Education* Influence Fabric Awareness, Usage Patterns, and Preferences



What is the highest level of education you have received?

- High school
- Diploma
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Doctorate

Education is a significant factor which indicates an individual's preferences for certain brands. Between the different stages of education-primary education, high school education, university education and professional education- an individual's preferences change with the knowledge and environment surrounding them. Awareness of fashion history and trends can influence fabric choices the most in school, work or home. Educated fabric consumers may be more likely to choose eco-friendly or ethically produced fabrics and higher education levels often correlate with increased awareness of fabric quality and sustainability.



- Student
- Professional
- Skilled laborer
- Homemaker
- Retired
- Entrepreneur
- Service
- Educator
- Mentor to students
- Realtor
- Business
- Investor
- Business owner

What is your appropriate monthly household income

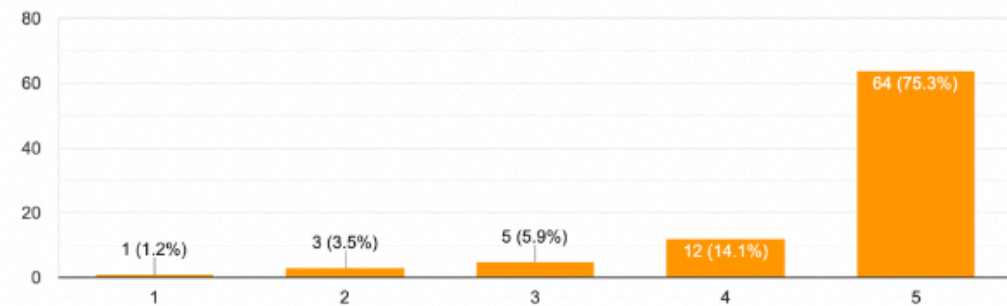
How Do *Income Levels* Influence Fabric Awareness, Usage Patterns, and Preferences



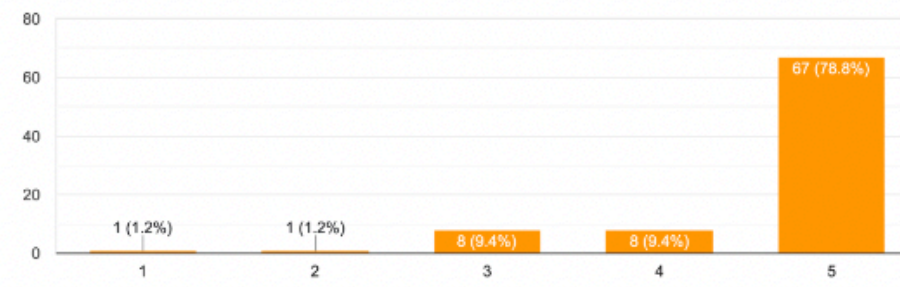
Income levels and accessibility can significantly impact fabric preferences in Urban areas of India. Higher-income groups may have greater or a wider variety of premium fabrics (like Silk, or Organic Cotton). Often these groups shop in branded stores or costly boutiques. On the other hand, middle and lower income groups may prioritize affordability (like Synthetic fabrics) or fabrics which offer durability at a low cost. Furthermore, higher levels of exposure to quality and sustainability in high class groups is often due to receiving a higher educational level. Educated customers in cities are more likely to take interest on fabric origins, ethical production and environmental impact- leading to the growing market of eco-friendly fabrics. Between low class, middle class and upper class there are different fabric preferences due to (1) access to product (2) access to education regarding the product (3) money to consistently purchase environmentally-friendly garments. It is common for minority groups to have traditionally received less education as they do not have access to it. Often, there is a lack of opportunities and earn lower than other economic groups. This affects the type and quality of fabrics they purchase, often which differ from others. Economic growth can boost the luxury fabric market, however if economic downturns are faced, the following economic classes-middle, upper middle, and upper class- may develop an increased demand for affordable and durable fabrics. Fabric availability can be affected by trade policies and tariffs.

Assessing Fabric Awareness Through A Semi-Structured Questionnaire | Results

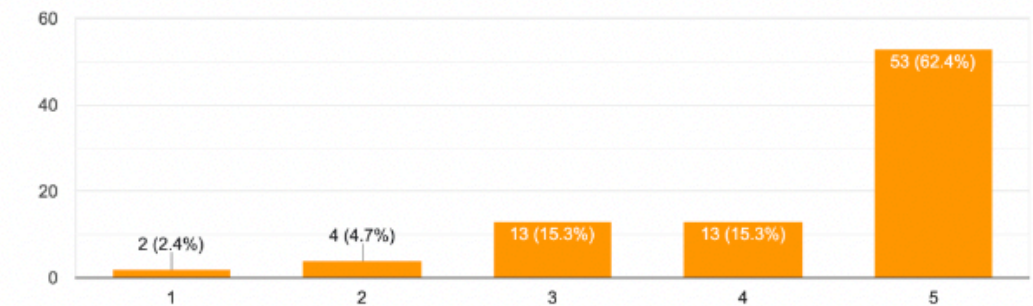
Linen
85 responses



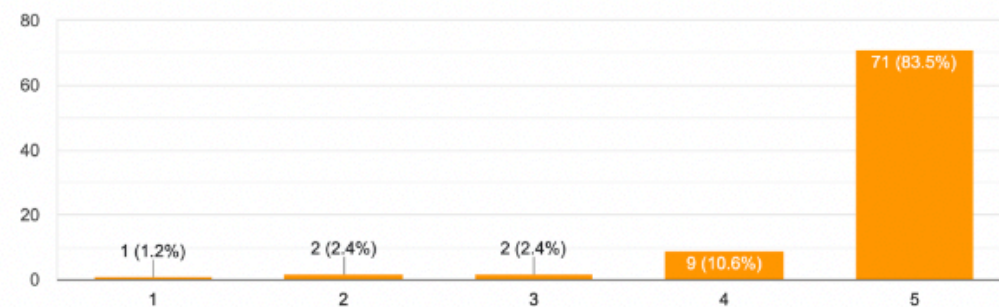
Leather
85 responses



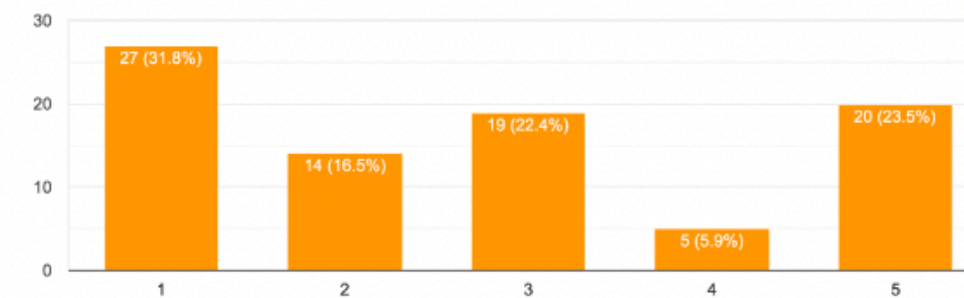
Polyester
85 responses



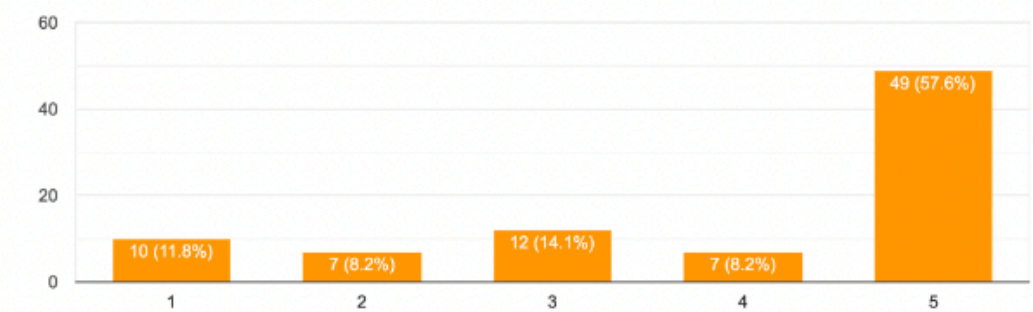
Denim
85 responses



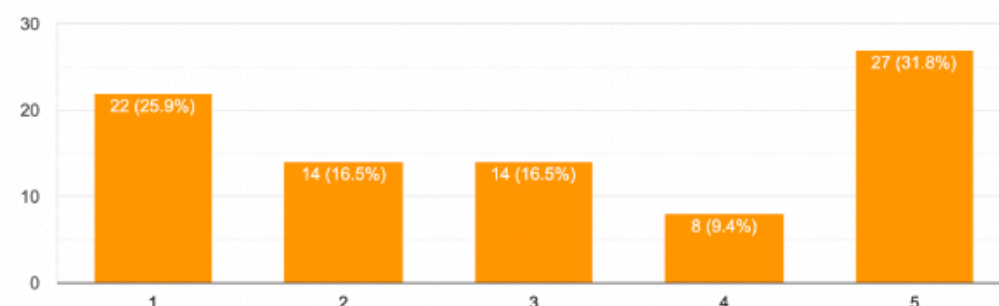
Hemp
85 responses



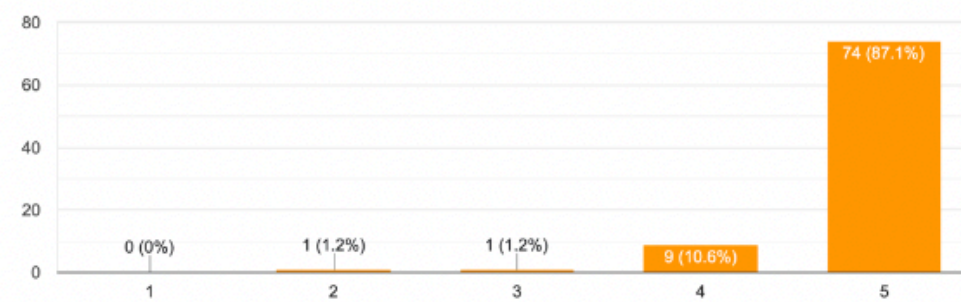
Corduroy
85 responses



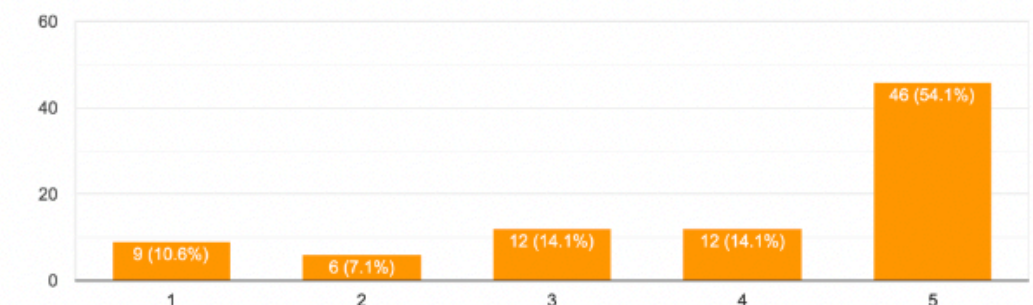
Bamboo linen
85 responses



Cotton
85 responses

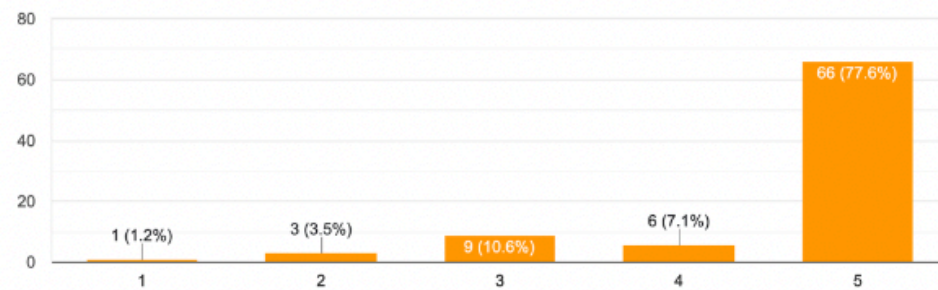


Organic cotton
85 responses

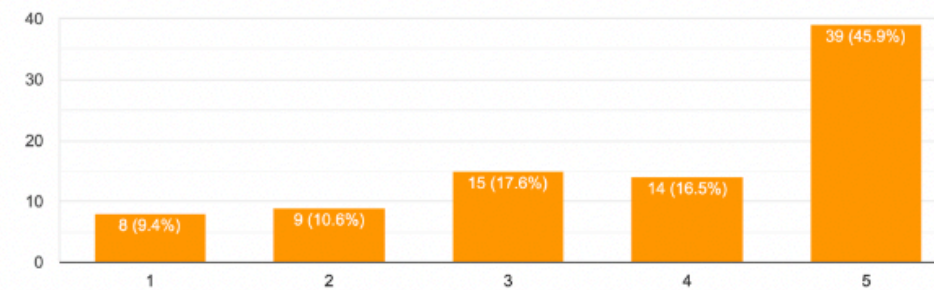


Assessing Fabric Awareness Through A Semi-Structured Questionnaire | Results

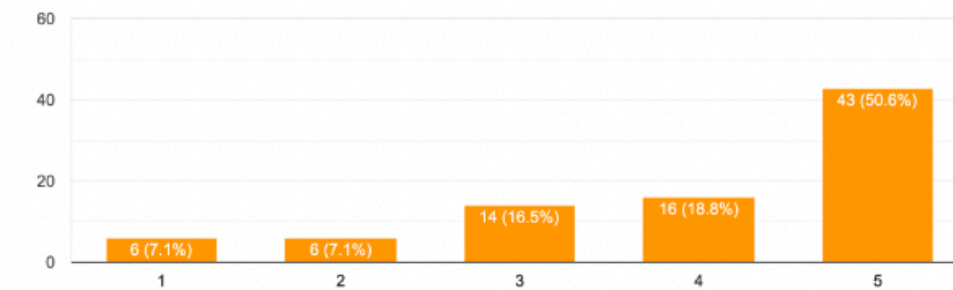
Silk
85 responses



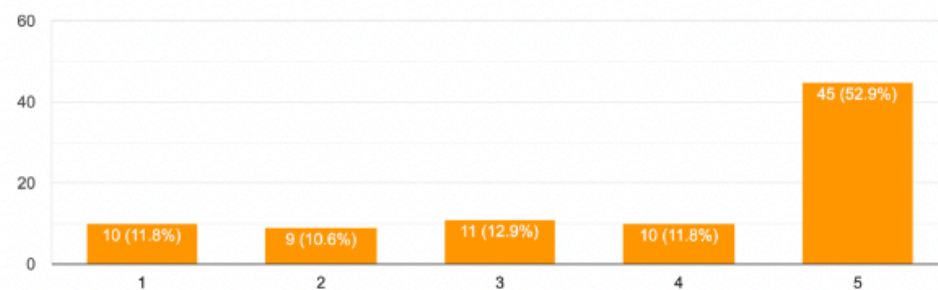
Muslin
85 responses



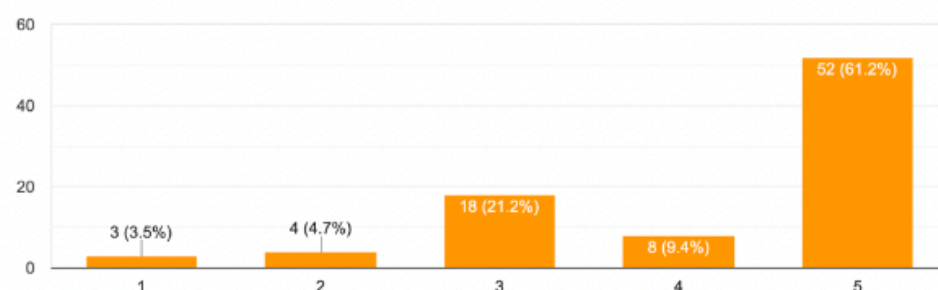
Cashmere
85 responses



Crêpe
85 responses

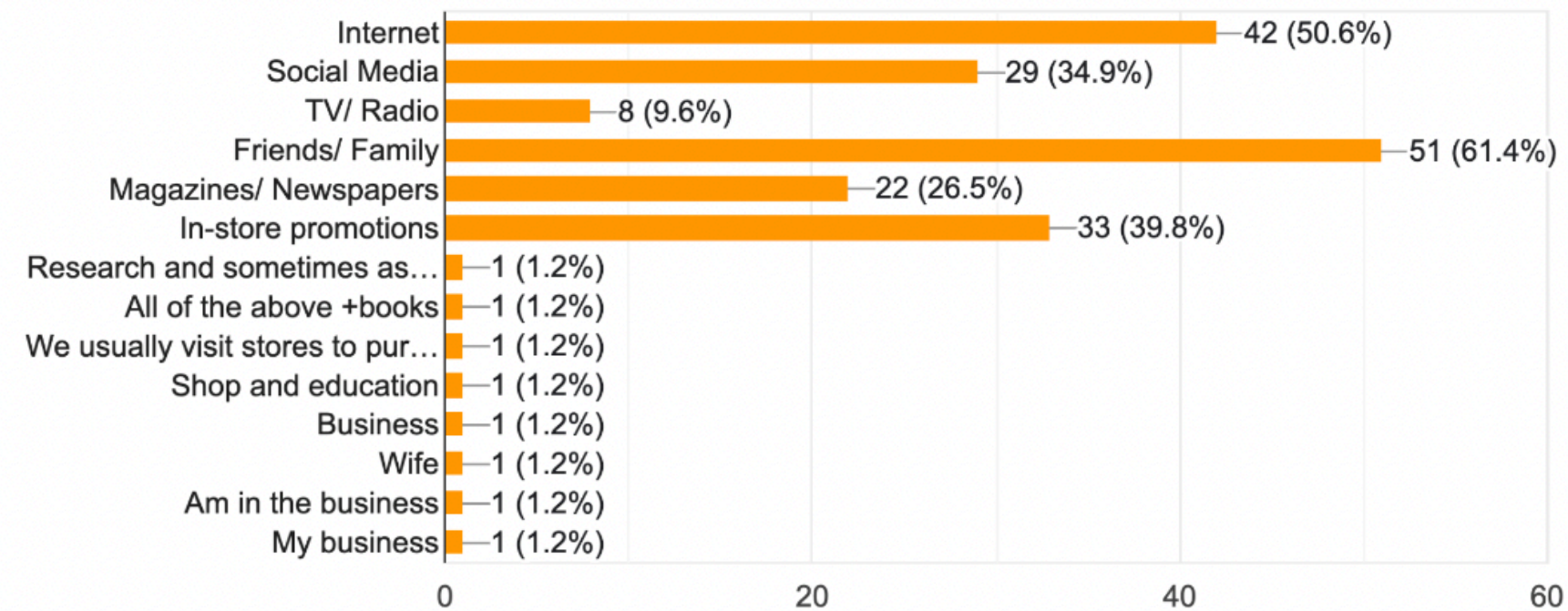


Nylon
85 responses



How do you usually get information about different fabrics?

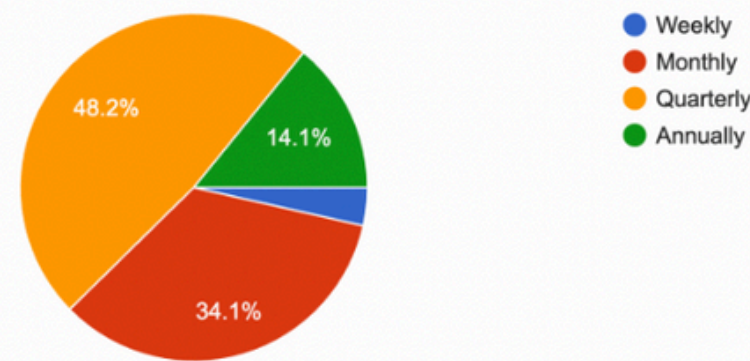
83 responses



Assessing Fabric Awareness Through A Semi-Structured Questionnaire | Results

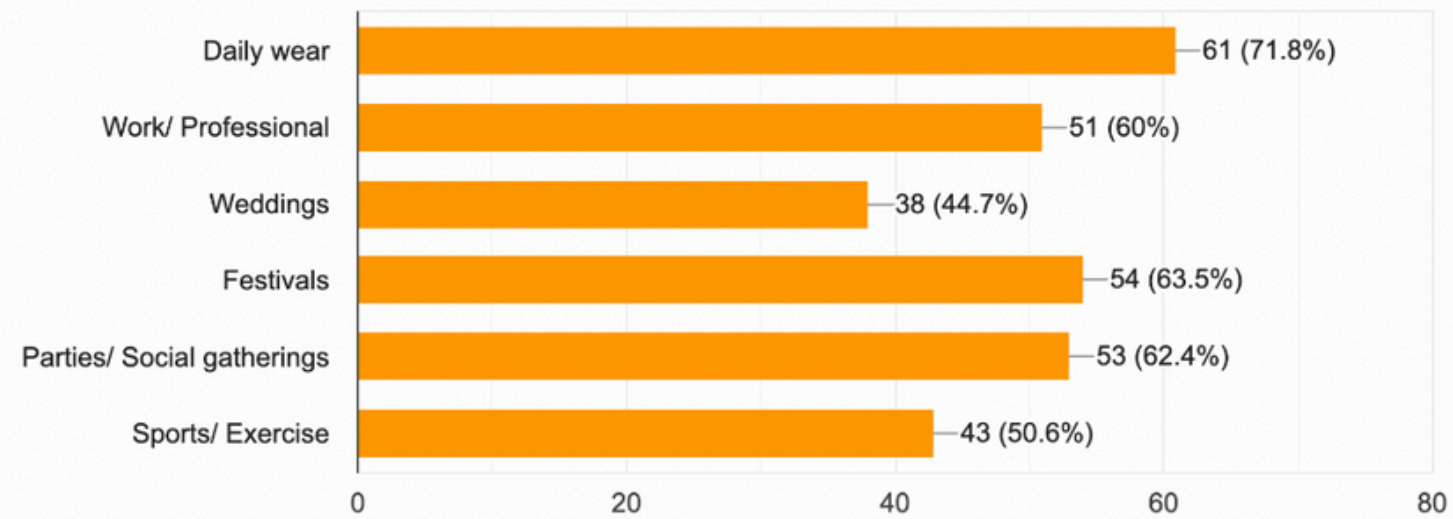
How often do you purchase clothing or fabrics?

85 responses



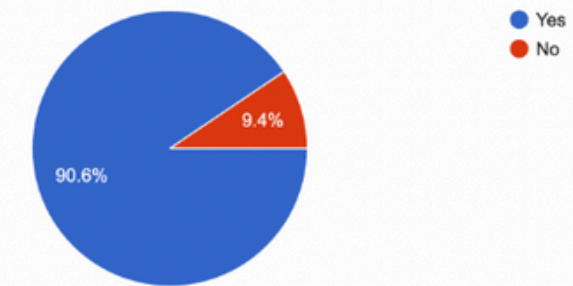
For what occasions do you usually buy new fabrics or clothes?

85 responses



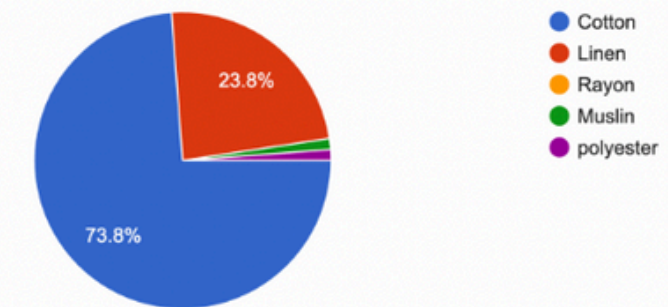
Do you change the type of fabrics based on the season?

85 responses



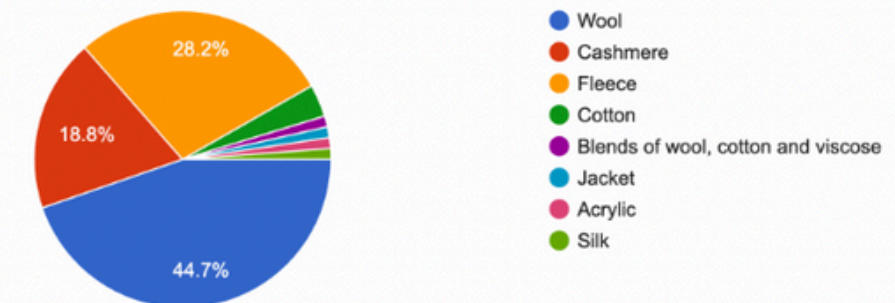
Which fabric do you prefer most during the summer?

84 responses



Which fabric do you prefer most during the winter?

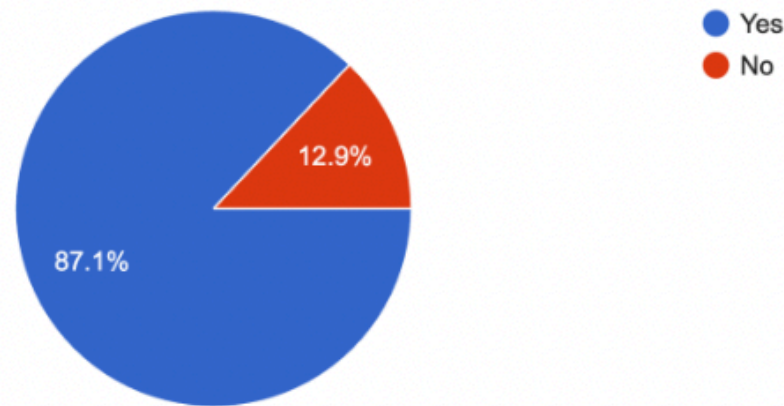
85 responses



Assessing Fabric Awareness Through A Semi-Structured Questionnaire | Results

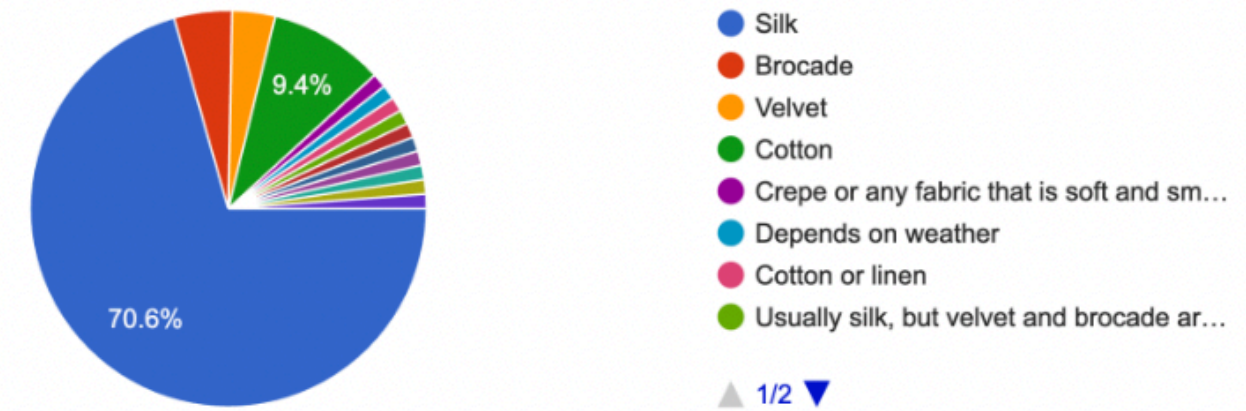
Do you change the type of fabric you wear based on weather conditions (e.g., rain, humidity)?

85 responses



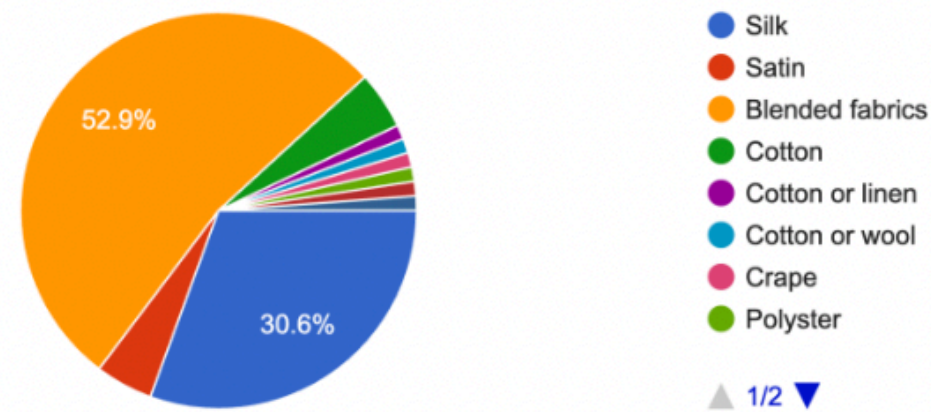
Which fabric do you prefer for traditional or cultural occasions?

85 responses



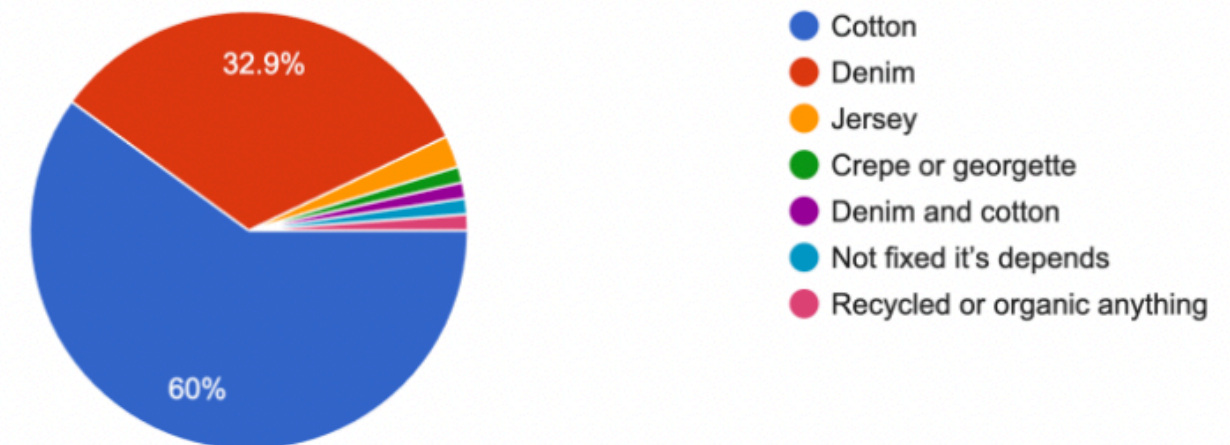
Which fabric do you prefer for formal events?

85 responses



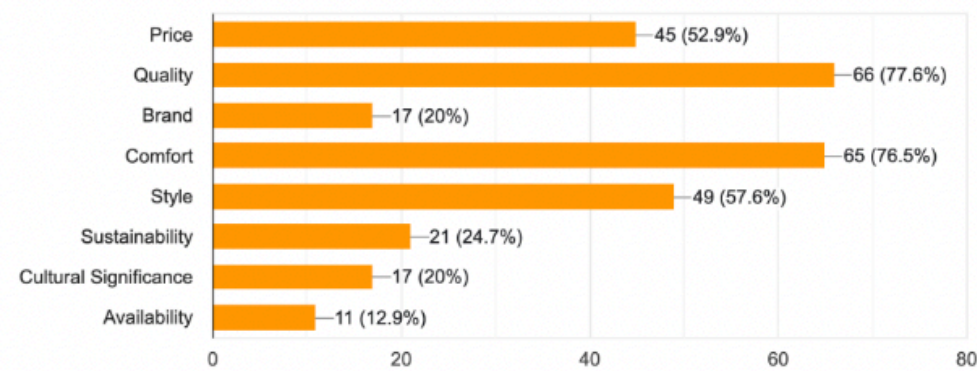
Which fabric do you prefer for casual outings?

85 responses

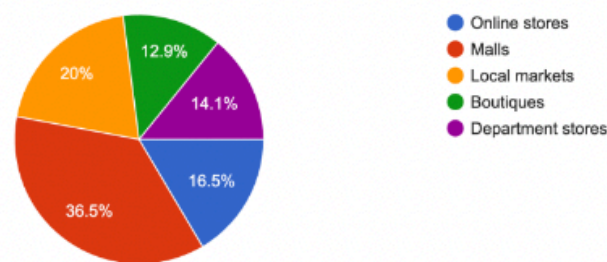


Assessing Fabric Awareness Through A Semi-Structured Questionnaire | Results

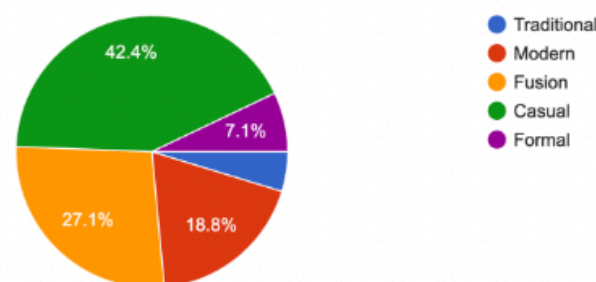
What factors influence your choice of fabric/ clothing?
85 responses



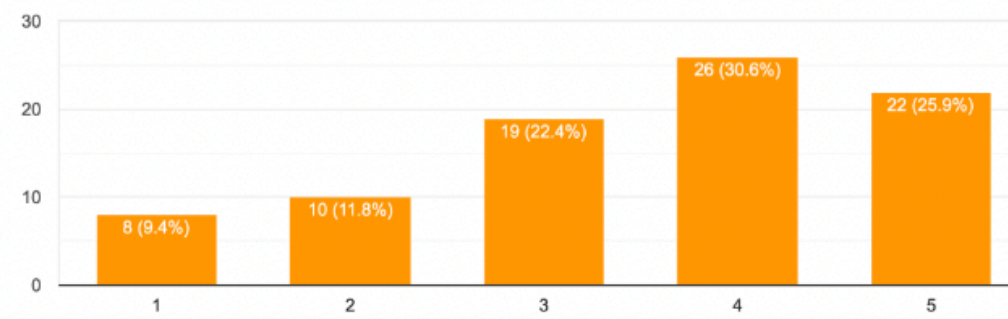
Where do you primarily shop for fabrics or clothing?
85 responses



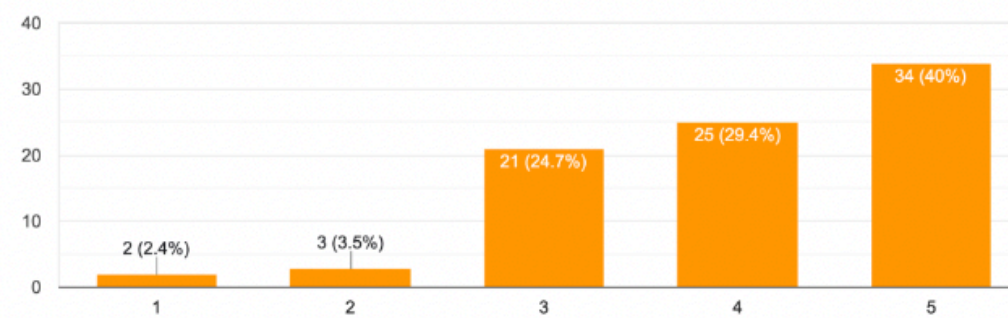
Which style of clothing do you prefer?
85 responses



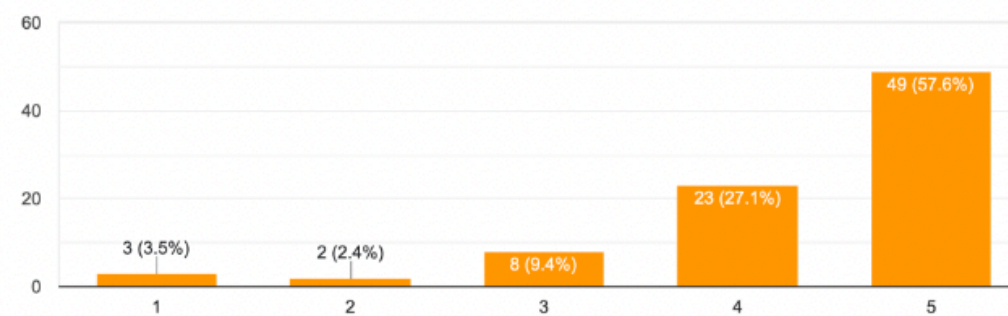
How important is it to purchase sustainably produced fabrics
85 responses



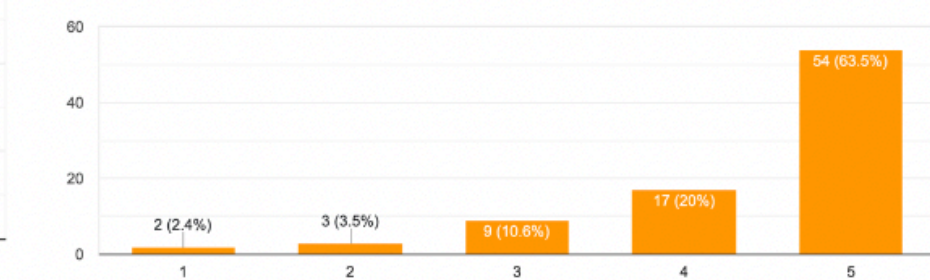
How important is the craftsmanship (e.g. handlooms) of the fabric/ clothing?
85 responses



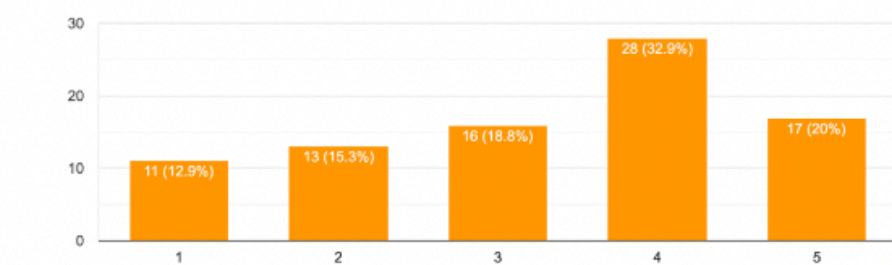
How important is weather when deciding which fabric to wear?
85 responses



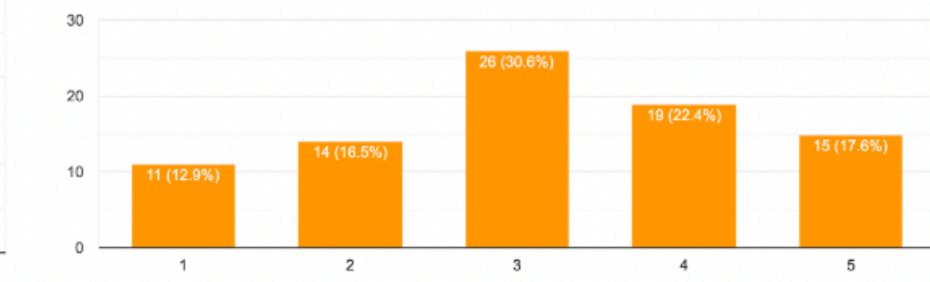
How important is the type of fabric when purchasing clothing?
85 responses



How much does cultural significance influence your fabric/ clothing choices?
85 responses

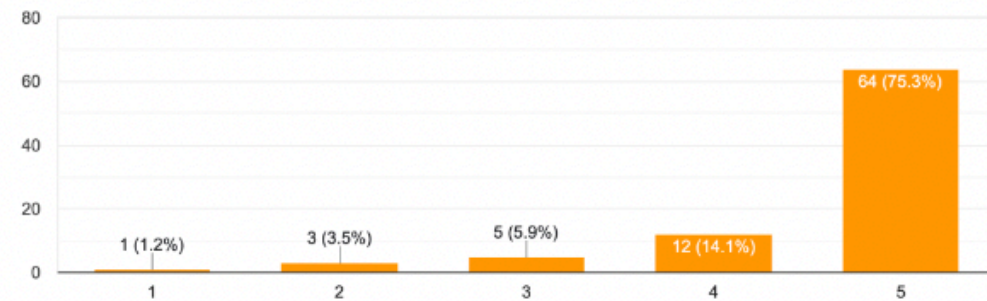


How much do ethical considerations (e.g. fair trade, labor practices) influence your fabric/ clothing choices?
85 responses

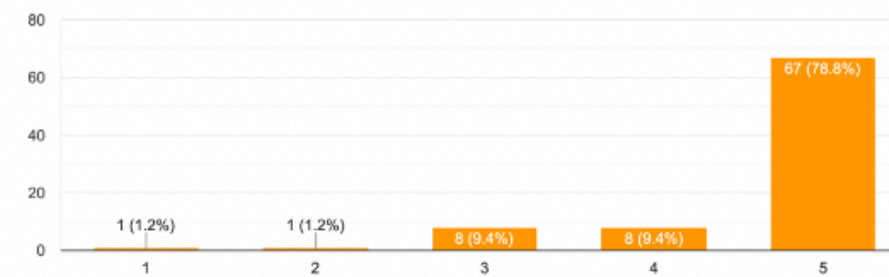


Assessing Fabric Awareness Through A Semi-Structured Questionnaire | Results

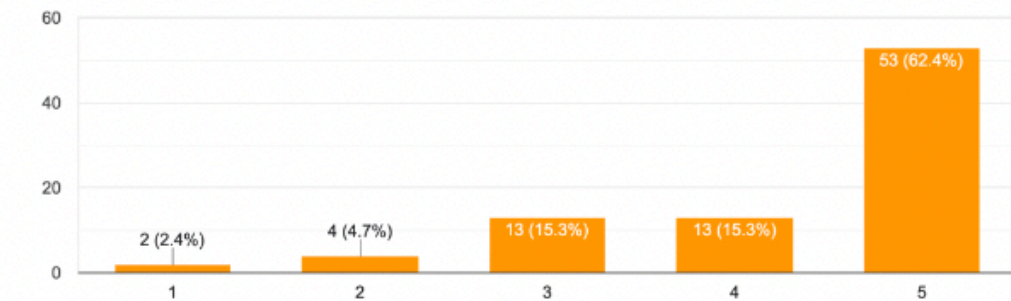
Linen
85 responses



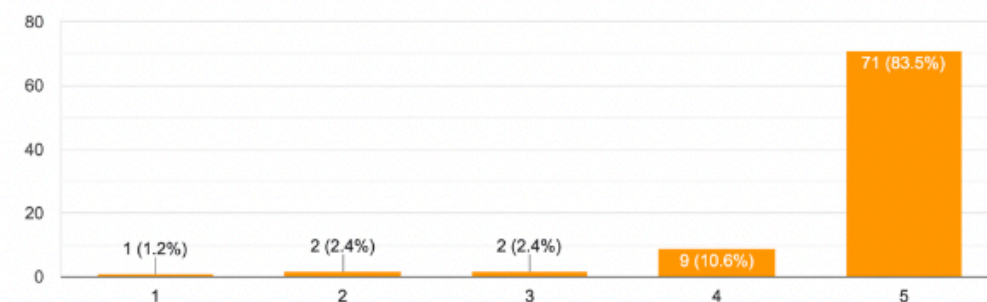
Leather
85 responses



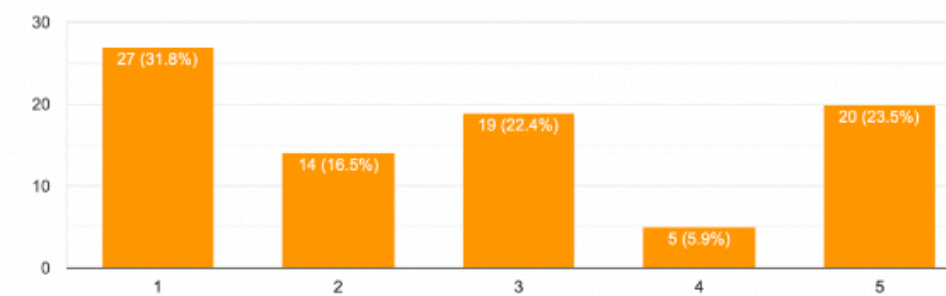
Polyester
85 responses



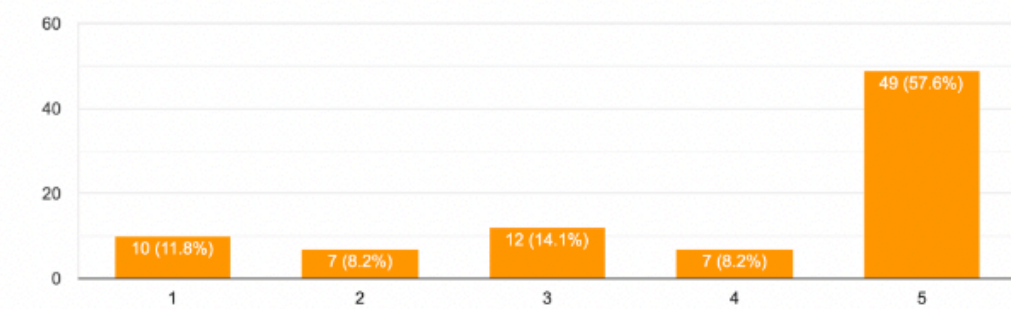
Denim
85 responses



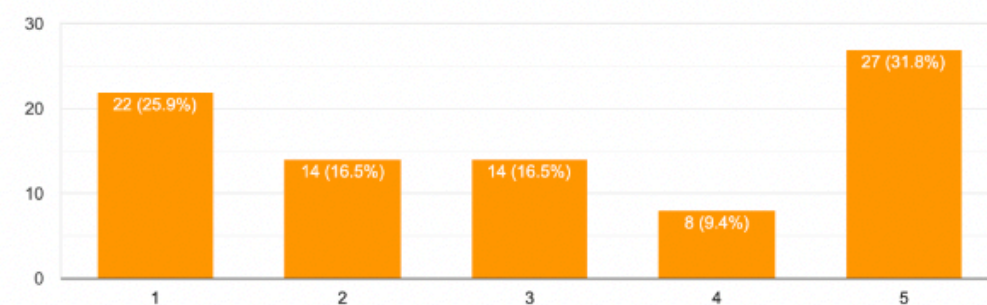
Hemp
85 responses



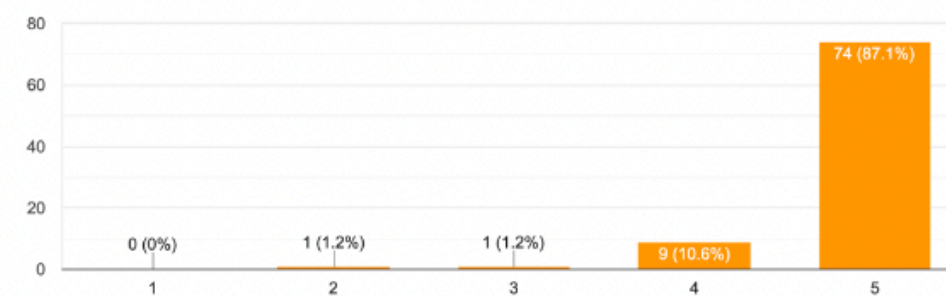
Corduroy
85 responses



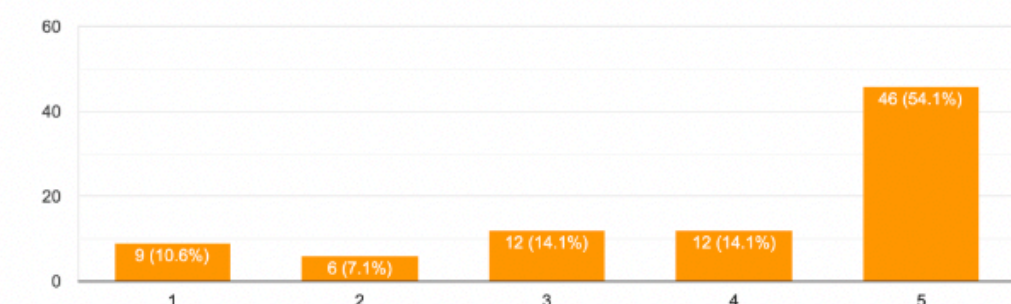
Bamboo linen
85 responses



Cotton
85 responses

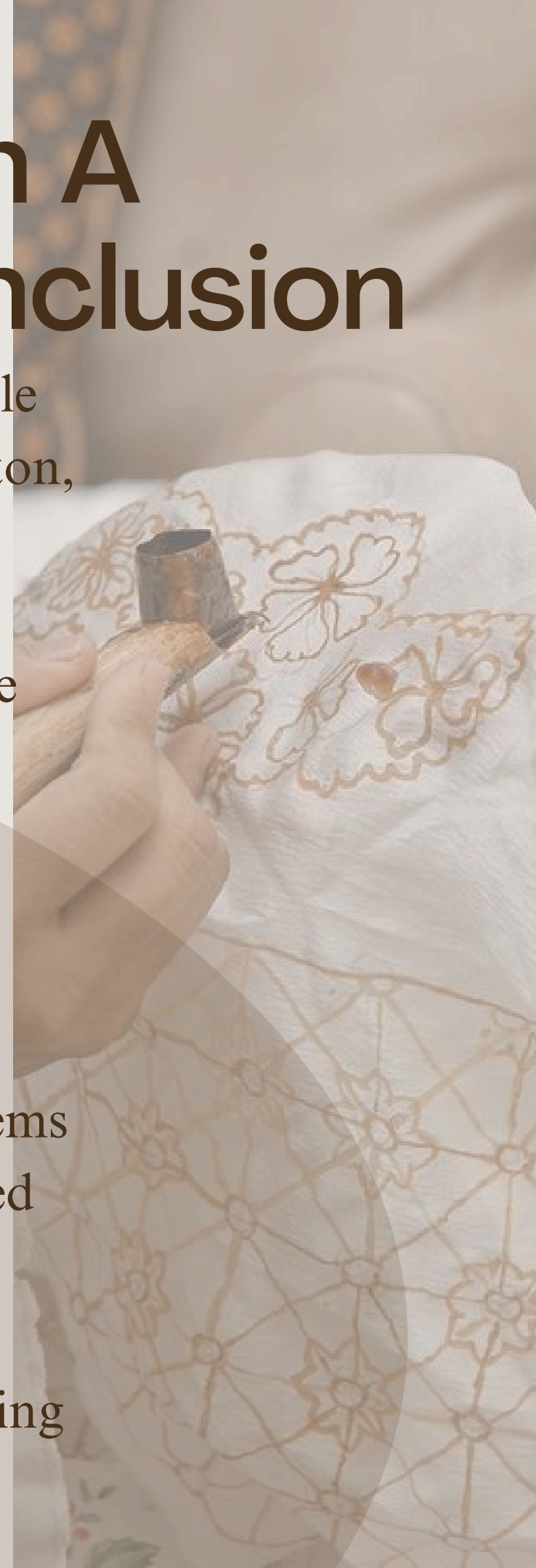


Organic cotton
85 responses



Assessing Fabric Awareness Through A Semi-Structured Questionnaire | Conclusion

Younger consumers like Gen Z and Millennials are more educated about trends in sustainable and eco-friendly fabrics. This age group exhibits a high awareness of fabrics like organic cotton, bamboo and recycled polyester. This awareness can stem from exposure to environmental activism popular on social media platforms and digital marketing campaigns promoting sustainability. There is a preference for trendy, colorful and in-style fashion which depicts the desire to stay up to date to fast fashion trends. However, purchasing behavior is heavily impacted through a limited income, leading to them opting for low-cost fabrics, sometimes being of eco-friendly fabrics. The duality between sustainability awareness and cost-consciousness highlights the complex purchasing patterns amongst the younger urban populations. Older consumers like Gen X and Baby Boomers seek durability and comfort in their clothing, reflecting the more traditional approach to fashion. Their fabric awareness stems from the familiarity with natural fibres like cotton, silk and wool. This group is not influenced by fast fashion trends as much as younger consumers, and they are more likely to invest in long-lasting fabrics that allow for comfort. Although they have a higher disposable income than younger consumers, their awareness of sustainable fabrics is significantly lower, indicating that sustainability is a newer value which is prominent in the younger urban population.



Assessing Fabric Awareness Through A Semi-Structured Questionnaire | Conclusion

Women demonstrate a broad understanding of fabrics. There is a balance of aesthetics and functionality. This can be explained through the wider variety of clothing options available to them, particularly in urban areas, where Western and Indian traditional attire coexist. There is a familiarity for fabrics like silk, chiffon and cotton which are often used in sarees and salwar kameez. However there is an awareness for more modern and sustainable fabrics like bamboo and organic cotton. Their choices reflect the interconnection of culture and modern fashion trends, making them versatile consumers of fabric. Additionally, women show a greater preference for eco-friendly fabrics as they have more awareness of sustainable issues and desire to combine aesthetics with ethical purchasing behavior. Men's fabric preferences are focused on functionality and practicality. Their choices are influenced by easy-to-maintain fabrics, particularly those suited for India's changing climate. The top preferred fabrics are cotton, linen and polyester blends which allow for durability and low-maintenance. There is a limited variety of men's clothes as compared for women's attire which also can contribute to the focus of practicality over fashion-forwardness. Nonetheless, men are gradually becoming aware of more sustainable options.

