

ISSUE 32

Women are Becoming More Powerful

Women have become the locomotives of our society. They are emerging as the leaders in all walks of life and are the boss in many families. For instance, according to a recent survey, women have the decisive vote in buying the family car. Do you agree with the results of the survey, based on your own family situation?

In what matters do women have the primary decision-making power?

- (1) Children's education
- (2) Buying a car
- (3) Eating out
- (4) Planning a vacation
- (5) Where to live
- (6) Visiting in-laws



Sample Answers

(A) If it were up to me, I would visit my in-laws as infrequently as possible. This is not because I think they are bad people, but they live far away. However, my wife insists that we visit once a month. To be fair, she also makes it a point that we visit my parents every month also. But that only leaves me two weekends a month to do what I want to do.

(B) My husband still makes all the important family decisions. But he closely *consults* me. If I don't agree with his judgment, he will usually change his mind.

Speak Your Mind

1. Who is the *breadwinner* in your family? Who manages the *finances* in your family? Are these the same person?
2. Can the husband in your family invite his friends to your house without the wife's prior permission?
3. Can the husband come home whenever he wants, no matter how late, whether the wife likes it or not?
4. Who has the stronger voice in deciding to buy things such as a car or furniture? The man or the woman of the house?
5. How have women gained a *dominant* role throughout our society as well as in the family?

- **consult** : discuss (sth) with (sb) in order to make a decision together

- **breadwinner** : member of a family who earns the money to support the others

- **finances** : money that a person, company, organization etc. has available

- **dominant** : ruling or controlling

SPEAK YOUR MIND

Speak Your Mind Helpers

1. Who is the breadwinner in your family? Who manages the finances in your family? Are these the same person?

(A)

I always *turn over* my pay to my wife so I don't have to take the time out of my own busy schedule to take care of the daily spending necessities. As a result, we always have fresh food on the table, and I have the comfort of knowing that the *basics* are well taken care of.

(B)

My husband and I both work. We jointly plan our household finances, and we each contribute to the family's *budget*. But we always make sure that we have money left over that is not mutually *accountable*. It's very nice to know that I can take a trip or buy a painting or give to a charity on my own, without worrying whether my husband will approve. This way I'm working for myself, not just my family.

2. Can the husband in your family invite his friends to your house without the wife's prior permission?

(A)

I have no *objection* to my husband's friends visiting our house; they are always welcome. But I do object to being surprised by their arrival. I'd like to know ahead of time so I can be prepared to welcome them with the full *hospitality* my home can offer.

(B)

I've noticed that my wife's friends are free to drop by whenever they like, without any sort of *prior* warning or invitation. All they do is sit around and gossip, while our normal family routine is interrupted. But if I ever bring my pals home with me, they're treated as though they are nuisances. And then, after they leave, I know that my wife will have plenty to say about not being given any advance notice. Reminding her about her friends' visits never seems to have any effect on the tone of the conversation.

3. Can the husband come home whenever he wants, no matter how late, whether the wife likes it or not?

(A)

I can come home any time I want to, even if I've had much too much to drink, as long as I'm prepared to sleep on the couch or in the car. But at least I have a hot breakfast waiting for me the next morning.

(B)

I realize that sometimes my husband can't control how early he comes home. Entertaining customers is an important part of his business. But he calls me to keep me informed about his estimated arrival time. At least then I don't have to worry about something having happened to him, like an accident. And I know that he always tries to be back at a reasonable hour, so we can spend some time together and still get enough sleep to stay healthy.

4. Who has the stronger voice in deciding to buy things such as a car or furniture? The man or the woman of the house?

(A)

In our house we have a simple rule: if it is strictly for the house, my wife makes all the decisions. If it is something entirely for business, I decide. But we have to reach an agreement on everything else. Sometimes my opinion *prevails* and sometimes it's my wife's *call*.

(B)

My husband thinks he makes all the decisions, so he is very happy about the way we dress and the way our house looks. Once in awhile, on unimportant matters, I let him do whatever he wants. I know the value of *stroking* his male ego, but I also know that he doesn't have very good taste or even sometimes very much sense about these matters.

Speak Your Mind

Speak Your Mind Helpers

5. How have women gained a dominant role throughout our society as well as in the family?

M : Did you read the paper? It looks like another country is going to have a woman president soon.

F : What? That's not news! There've been lots of female presidents and prime ministers. Most of them have been better than the men who usually *run* their countries.

M : Are you claiming that women are superior to men?

F : Well, aren't they? Do you deny the point I'm making? How would you *account for* it then?

M : Not all the women in those positions did a particularly good job, though I'll *concede* that most of them were excellent. But it's not a matter of gender.

F : What is it, then?

M : Well, some people are negatively *prejudged*. Maybe it's sex or race or family background. But no one expects them to get ahead. Most occupations, especially in government and politics, kept women out for a long time. So some very talented person, who happens to be a woman, climbs to the top of her profession and does an exceptional job because she had to work even harder than her male rivals to get to that position. If she had been a man and had accomplished the same things, no one would mention his gender; but a woman, or anyone else who does not *fit* the stereotype, would be especially noticed *on that account* alone. But as more women succeed, gender will become less *remarkable*.

- F** : You think you have a smart answer for everything, don't you? Why don't you just admit it: Women are smarter than men. That's why you *kept us down* for millennia, because you knew you couldn't compete with us in a fair contest. So you made sure we would stay uneducated and stuck at home raising the kids.
- M** : Most men are much bigger and stronger than most women, and of course men can't have babies. So it's true that men did most of the hard work outside the home, and women took care of the family. Now, most jobs don't need physical strength to perform, and families are a lot smaller. So men opened many opportunities to women. But neither men nor women are smarter than the other just because of their gender.
- F** : Men did no such thing! Men did everything they could to keep their women down. It was the women who forced men to hire and promote them. Some men were smart enough to realize that the job would get done better if women did it, that's all.
- M** : Somehow I get the feeling that I'm the one who is being told that merely because of my sexual identity I'm automatically being placed in an inferior role. It was wrong for men to do that to women, and I think it's wrong for women to do that to men as well.
- F** : Get used to it. It's *pay back time!*

