

# **Self-reported Health Issues among Sri Lankan Youth: How Healthy are they?**

**Wijebandara, W.A.Chandani<sup>1</sup>, De Silva, W. Indralal<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Department of Census and Statistics

<sup>2</sup>Department of Demography, University of Colombo

[Indralald37@gmail.com](mailto:Indralald37@gmail.com)

Health status of youth is an important parameter to examine carefully since they are the members in the society who could contribute to the development of a country in a significant manner. This important goal has been attended by the Department of Census and Statistics (DCS) by collecting data on self-reported health conditions of people in the country through a National Survey on self-reported Health in Sri Lanka 2014. In this survey 25,000 housing units were selected as the national sample, covering all 25 districts of the country. Although the survey covered the entire population residing in selected housing units, the present study only analyses the self-reported chronic and acute health conditions of youth in age 15-29 years.

As of the survey, the prevalence of chronic illnesses (such as diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, cancer, asthma etc.) among the youth population is estimated to be 4.4 per cent. Female youth suffer with chronic diseases much more than their male counterparts. Among the youth, the age and self-reported health complications show a clear positive trend; youth of age 15-19 reported the lowest chronic health issues while the youth age 25-29 group reported the highest. Although among the age 15+ population, high blood pressure (9.2 per cent) is noted to be ranked at the top of the list, among the youth it is asthma (1.1 per cent) which has been reported at the top. It is important to note the prevalence of mental illness at the second highest position among the youth in Sri Lanka. By using a reference period of four weeks, self-reported information on acute illnesses (such as Fever, Cough, Headache and Joint aches ...etc.) was also gathered in the survey. Among the youth, the self-reported acute illnesses were 9.8 per cent while of the age 15+ population the corresponding figure is 11.5 per cent. The female youth (12.7 per cent) suffer with acute illness more than males (10 per cent). Of the reported acute illnesses among the youth, fever (6 per cent) ranks at the top followed by cough and headache. Also the survey found that regular smoking and regular alcohol use

among youths less than age 20 (0.5 % or 0.4% respectively) is significantly lower compared to youths in age 20 -29 (20.7 % or 21.6% respectively).

Although there was a significant difference existed in the prevalence of chronic disease between youth and of age 15+ population in Sri Lanka, the difference in the prevalence of acute illness was not very significant. Although the self-reported health conditions are not perfect health indicators of population health, by repeating the same kind of surveys the trends in the health status of the population could be assessed appropriately. Such assessment will be extremely important for future development planning particularly by taking into consideration of the more dynamic group in the population that is the youth. By improving their health conditions they will be in a better position to contribute to the development process in a more sustainable manner.

**Key words:** *Self-reported illnesses, Morbidity, Chronic and acute diseases, Youth.*