

#RegionIXYouthToday: Risk Behavior of Young People in the Zamboanga Peninsula¹

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Background

The paper presents the result of the series of Young Adult Fertility and Sexuality (YAFS) studies conducted in 1982, 1994, 2002 and 2013 with particular focus on the various sexual and non-sexual risk behaviors, teen pregnancy and HIV-AIDS among youth living in the Zamboanga Peninsula.

The YAFS is a series of nationally representative cross-sectional surveys on the Filipino youth aged 15-24 conducted by the University of the Philippines Population Institute (UPPI) and the Demographic Research and Development Foundation (DRDF). YAFS is the only survey of young people that is nationally and regionally representative covering a wide range of topics of relevance to this significant segment of the population. The main goal of the study is to provide updated information on a broad framework of adolescent sexuality and reproductive health issues including their antecedents and manifestations that can be used in various intervention measures in order to safeguard the health and welfare of the youth. Largely quoted for its findings on sexual and non-sexual risk behaviors and its determinants, the YAFS series covers a wide range of information about today's youth such as their education trajectories, labor force participation, family relationships and the role of parents in their lives, attitudes and values, personal characteristics like self-esteem, and adverse conditions like suicidal ideation and depression symptoms, all of which are of relevance to our understanding of this significant segment of Philippine society.

The most recent data on YAFS was collected in 2013 with funding from the Australian Government, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Department of Health (DOH) and Philippine Council for Health Research and Development (PCHRD). The study interviewed a total of 19,178 young people representing all sectors including males and females, single and married and the Muslim youth.

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Region IX Findings

Socio-economic-demographic background

- There are 686,024 youth ages 15-24 in Region IX as of the last census of population taken in 2010. This constitutes about 4 percent of the country's total youth population.
- While most of the youth have at least some high school education, about one in five have no schooling or have at most an elementary education. The proportion with some college education is higher than the national average and is among the highest in the country. The region is similar with the national in terms of the level of youth who are currently studying at the time of the survey.
- Over two in five youth in the region are working, among the highest in the country.
- Region IX is one among the regions with proportion of unemployed youth (5.9%) lower than the national (7.4%).
- Region IX has the 4th highest proportion of idle youth (not studying nor working).
- More youth who are in a live-in arrangement (14.5%) than in a formal union (11.3%), a pattern consistent with the national picture. Region IX is among the highest regional proportion of youth who are living-in.
- Region IX youth are digitally wired. Seven in 10 own a cellular phone and more than two-fifth of them use the internet, more than one-third have an email account or a social networking account.

Non-sexual risk behaviors

- There is a declining proportion of youth who are currently smoking.
- The percentage of youth who are currently smoking is 18.4 percent which is below the national average.
- The percentage of youth who are currently drinking alcoholic beverages declined in the last decade and is below the national average. Region IX has the 3rd smallest proportion of currently drinking youth.
- Consistent with the decline in the percent of current smokers and drinkers, percentage of Region IX youth who ever used drugs declined in the past decade, it is the same as the national level at 4%.
- Between 2002 and 2013, the proportion of youth who ever thought of committing suicide decreased in Region IX, following the declining pattern at the national level. The region registers the seventh highest percentage of youth who ever thought of committing suicide (9.5%).

- For the same period, the percentage who attempted to commit suicide increased, contradicting the declining national trajectory.
- Considerable proportion of Region IX youth have experienced physical violence both as aggressors (20.7%) and as victims (11.0%).
- Region IX joins the other regions (SOCCCKSARGEN, Western Visayas, Cagayan Valley, ARMM and Central Luzon) with the lowest proportion of youth who have experienced harassment, using technology (3.8%).

Sources of information about sex

- More than two in five Region IX youth do not have any source of information about sex, the 8th highest among all regions in the country.
- Friends of the same sex, medical professionals and mothers are Region IX youth's most preferred sources of information about sex and reproduction.
- Friends of the same sex and mothers are the persons most Region IX youth will consult if they have questions about sex and reproduction.
- Region IX has the sixth smallest proportion of youth who can find help in school regarding sex-related problems.
- Only 6.8% of the Region IX youth has discussed sex at home while growing up.
- Most discussions of sex at home are between brothers, fathers and sons, mothers and daughters, and sisters.

Sex and media

- Three in ten youth have read pornographic materials (34.9 percent among males and 23.3 percent among females). The proportion of youth who have read pornographic materials has declined from 35.1 percent in 2002 to 29.3 percent in 2013.
- More than half of the youth have watched x-rated movies and videos (74.2 percent among males and 32.9 percent among females). The proportion of youth who have watched x-rated movies and videos has increased from 46.5 percent in 2002 to 54.0 percent in 2013.
- The youth also engage in other media-related sexual activities.
 - 14.2 percent have visited websites with sexually-explicit content
 - 1 in 5 has sent or received sex videos through cellphones or internet
 - 9 in 100 have engaged in phone sex
 - 3 in 100 had sex with someone they met online or through text messages
 - 1 in 100 has recorded himself/herself having sex

Sexual risks

- Two in five Region IX youth ages 15-24 have sexual experience.
- The youth's sexual debut is getting younger as indicated by the mean age at first sex which declined from 18.3 years in 1994 to 17.6 years in 2013 for males. The corresponding figures for females are 18.4 years and 17.8 years, respectively.
- Increasing proportion of youth who engage in early sex, particularly among males
 - The proportion of male youth who have engaged in sex before age 15 increased from less than one percent in 1994 to 2.4 percent in 2013. However, for females, there was a slight decline from 2.9 percent in 2002 to 2.3 percent in 2013.
 - The proportion of youth ages 18-24 who have engaged in sex before age 18 also increased from 10.3 percent in 1994 to 28.2 percent in 2013 for the males. The figures for the females are 9.4 percent and 22.0 percent, respectively.
- More than one in three Region IX youth aged 15-24 in 2013 had engaged in sex before marriage. (Region XI is the region with the 5th highest prevalence of premarital sex.) This is a considerable increase from the level in 1994 at 15.2 percent.
- Narrowing gap in levels of premarital sex between males and females over time
- Region IX has the highest prevalence of unprotected premarital sexual encounters against unintended pregnancy and/or STIs, i.e., 91.9 percent of the first premarital sex encounters are unprotected. Condom and withdrawal are the most common methods used among those who used some methods of contraception.
- Low and about the same with the national average level of commercial sex
- 6.2 percent of the youth engage in casual sex
- 2.5 percent of the youth, mostly males also have FUBU (fuck buddies).
- 1.6 percent of married youth (including those in living-in arrangement) have engaged in extramarital sex

Teenage fertility

- Increased teenage fertility in the past decade
 - The level of females 15-19 who are mothers increased from 9.3 percent in 2002 to 16.3 percent in 2013
 - The percent of females 15-19 who are pregnant with the first child increased from 2.1 percent in 2002 to 2.7 percent in 2013

- Percent of females 15-19 who have begun childbearing doubled from 7.1 percent in 2002 to 13.5 percent in 2013
- The proportion of women who have begun childbearing increases with age, i.e., from 6.1 percent among those aged 16 to 50.0 percent among those aged 19.

HIV-AIDS

- The proportion of youth who have heard of AIDS has declined from 91.6 percent in 2002 to 80.1 percent in 2013.
- Region IX youth have moderate level of knowledge about HIV transmission prevention methods
 - 67.1 percent agree that the risk of HIV transmission can be reduced by having sex with only one uninfected partner who has no other sexual partners
 - 63.1 percent agree that the risk of HIV transmission can be reduced by using a condom every time they have sex
 - 58.9 percent agree that a healthy looking person can have HIV
 - 52.3 percent agree that a person cannot get HIV from mosquito bites
 - 39.0 percent agree that a person cannot get HIV by sharing food with someone who is infected
 - 39.8 percent think that AIDS is curable
- 7 in 10 youth feel invincible to AIDS, i.e., they think there is no chance of them getting AIDS.