

#RegionYouthToday: Risk Behavior of Young People in the Ilocos Region¹

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Background

As of 2010, the Ilocos Region has a total of 885,934 youth ages 15-24. This constitutes 4.9 percent of the Philippines' total youth population of 18 million. Region I remains to have a young population with 18.7 percent of its population in ages 15-24.

This paper provides a summary of key findings from the 2013 Young Adult Fertility and Sexuality (YAFS) study with particular focus on the various sexual and non-sexual risk behaviors, teen pregnancy and HIV-AIDS among youth living in Region I.

The YAFS is a series of nationally representative cross-sectional surveys on the Filipino youth aged 15-24 conducted by the Demographic Research and Development Foundation (DRDF) and the University of the Philippines Population Institute (UPPI). The series includes surveys conducted in 1982, 1994 and 2002. 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.

YAFS aims to provide updated information on a broad range of adolescent sexuality and reproductive health issues – its antecedents and manifestations which can be used in formulating intervention measures that will promote and 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 is also rich on data regarding young people's educational 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. These are relevant to our understanding of today's young people.

The fourth round of YAFS was conducted 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 **2013 YAFS or YAFS4** interviewed a total of 19,178 young people representing all sectors including males and females, single and married and the Muslim youth.

¹ Paper presented in the YAFS4 Regional Dissemination in Hotel Consuelo, Lingayen, Pangasinan on September 12, 2014.

Region I Key Findings from the 2013 YAFS

Socio-economic-demographic background

- Most of the youth have at least some high school education (91 %). The rest (9 %) have no schooling or have at most an elementary education.
- 38.9 percent of the youth are studying. The proportion of youth who have reached college is the fifth highest among all regions in the country.
- Female youth are better educated than their male counterparts. Among Region I youth, 27.9 percent of females and 17.7 percent of males have reached college.
- One in four youth in the region is working, which is about the same as the national level.
- 38.1 percent of male youth and 10.9 percent of female youth are working.
- One in 20 youth are neither studying nor working, the fourth lowest in the country.
- More youth are in a live-in arrangement (12.1 %) than in a formal union (7.6 %) - a pattern consistent with the national figure. The proportion of never-married youth (79.4 %) is the third highest among all regions in the country.

Media, Lifestyle and Health

- Region I youth are digitally wired:
 - 86.8 % own a cellular phone, the second highest in the country
 - 66.3 % use the internet, the fourth highest in the country
 - 59.8 % have a social networking account, the fourth highest in the country
 - 60.3 % own an email account, the third highest in the country
 - 86.2 percent of the youth watch the television regularly.
- Nearly half of Region I youth (49.2 %) exercise at least twice a week

- Region I youth are very high consumers of 'unhealthy' food and drink. At least once a week,
 - 47.9 % eat hamburger, the country's fourth highest
 - 48.0 % eat fried chicken, the country's fifth highest
 - 73.1 % consume instant noodles, the country's third highest
 - 62.7 % consume fried street food, the country's highest
 - 63.1 % eat grilled street food, the country's highest
 - 79.8 % drink carbonated drinks, the country's highest
 - 67.4 % drink coffee or tea

Non-sexual risk behaviors

- The proportion of Region I youth who are currently smoking has decreased (from 19.5 % to 18.6 %) and is below the national level (19.7 %).
- The percentage of youth who are currently drinking alcoholic beverages has declined (from 39.2 % to 36.0 %), and it is slightly below the national average (36.7 %).
- Proportion of youth who have ever used drugs has dropped from 8.1 percent to 1.6 percent in the past decade making it the second lowest in the country.
- One in ten Region I youth have ever thought of committing suicide (10.0 %), placing above the national level (8.7 %).
- The percentage of youth who attempted to commit suicide increased (from 2.1 % to 2.6 %) but is still below the national level.
- Considerable proportions of Region I youth have experienced physical violence both as aggressors (22.7 %) and as victims (16.7 %).
- The proportion of youth who have experienced harassment using technology (7.3%) is the second highest in the country.

Sources of information about sex

- 56.4 percent of Region I youth do not have any source of information about sex, the third highest in the country.
- Friends of the same sex, medical professionals, and mothers are the most preferred sources of information about sex and reproduction.
- 44.9 percent of the youth reported that they can find help in school regarding sex-related problems, with their classmates as the leading source of such support (13 %).
- A great majority of the youth in the region would like to learn general information about sex.
- Only six in 100 youth have discussed sex at home while growing up, the third lowest proportion in the country.
- More male youth discuss sex at home with their fathers; the female youth with their mothers.

Sex and media

- 35.1 percent of Region I youth have read pornographic materials (44.1 percent among males and 29.1 percent among females), which is the sixth highest in the country.
- 60.8 percent have watched x-rated movies and videos (80.1 percent among males and 41.0 percent among females), the fifth highest among all regions in the country.
- The youth also engage in other media-related sexual activities.
 - 14.1 percent have visited websites with sexually-explicit content
 - 22 percent have sent or received sex videos through cellphones or internet
 - 4.7 percent have engaged in phone sex
 - 2.6 percent had sex with someone they met online or through text messages
 - 0.4 percent have recorded themselves having sex

Sexual risks

- 37.3 percent of the youth in the region have sexual experience which is below the national level.
- Region I youth engage in sex at young ages.
 - The mean age at first sex is 17.6 years for males and 17.8 years for females.
 - 2.3 percent of male youth and 1.3 percent of female youth had sex before age 15.
 - 24.0 percent of male youth and 23.7 percent of the female youth had sex before age 18.
- Three in ten youth had engaged in sex before marriage, which is below the national level.
- 66.4 percent of first premarital sexual encounters were unprotected against unintended pregnancy and/or STIs – the lowest in the country. Condom is the most common method used by those who used some methods of contraception.
- There is a low and declining level of commercial sex activities, most of which are unprotected. Among the youth in Region I in 2013, 0.6 percent paid for sex and 1 percent received payment for sex.
- The youth have also engaged in other sexual activities with low level of protection against unintended pregnancy and STIs.
 - 5.6 percent of the youth have engaged in casual sex.
 - 2.9 percent of the youth, mostly males also have FUBU (friends with benefits or fuck buddies).
 - 5.1 percent of male youth have engaged in sex with another male.
 - 3.1 percent of married youth (including those in living-in arrangement) have engaged in extramarital sex.

Teenage fertility

- Teenage fertility has tripled in the past decade.

- 10.6 percent of females aged 15-19 are already mothers.
 - 2.5 percent of females aged 15-19 were pregnant with their first child at the time of the survey interview.
 - 12.7 percent of females aged 15-19 have begun childbearing.
- The proportion of women who have begun childbearing generally increases with age, (i.e., from 1.3 percent among those aged 15 to 28.9 percent among those aged 19).
 - The level of teenage fertility in Region I is below the national level.
- HIV-AIDS**
- As of 2013, only 81.8 percent of Region I youth have heard of AIDS. This proportion is slightly below the national level (83.3 %).
 - Misconceptions about HIV transmission are common among Region I youth.
- 64.2 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.
 - 53.3 percent agree that the risk of HIV transmission can be reduced by using a condom every time they have sex.
 - 56.3 percent agree that a healthy-looking person can have HIV.
 - 64.7 percent agree that a person cannot get HIV from mosquito bites.
 - 45.6 percent agree that a person cannot get HIV by sharing food with someone who is infected.
 - 42.7 percent think that AIDS is curable.
- 83.6 percent of the youth feel invincible to AIDS, i.e., they think there is no chance of them getting AIDS.



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