

#CaragaYouthToday: Risk Behavior of Young People in Caraga¹

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Background

The 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 Caraga.

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). 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 recent YAFS data 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.

¹ Paper presented in the YAFS4 Regional Dissemination held in Butuan City on 1 August 2014.

Some Key Findings

Socio-economic-demographic background

- There are 488,958 youth ages 15-24 in Caraga as of the last census of population taken in 2010. This constitutes about 2.7 percent of the country's total youth population.
- While most of the youth have at least some high school education, 16 percent have no schooling or have at most an elementary education. The proportion studying (39.7%) is the third highest in the country. The region, however, has the third lowest proportion of youth with college and higher education.
- One in five youth in the region is working, the fifth lowest in the country.
- Caraga has the second lowest proportion of unemployed youth (4.6%).
- One in ten Caraga youth is idle (not studying nor working).
- Far more youth are in a live-in arrangement (16.7%) than in a formal union (4%), a pattern consistent with the national picture. Caraga has the second lowest percentage of formally married youth but has the third highest proportion of youth who are in live-in arrangement.
- Caraga youth are digitally wired. 70.9% own a cellular phone and 54% of them use the internet, own an email account or have a social networking account.
- Only two in five youth exercise at least 2-3 times a week, the third lowest proportion in the country
- Caraga youth are relatively low consumers of unhealthy foods and drinks.

Non-sexual risk behaviors

- There is a decrease in the proportion of youth who are current smokers.
- The percentage of youth who are currently smoking is 16.4 percent which is below the national average (19.7 %).
- The percentage of youth who are currently drinking alcoholic beverages also declined in the last decade and is below the national average (36.7 %).
- The percentage of Caraga youth who ever used drugs declined in the past decade but it is still the third highest in the country after Regions XI (9.2%) and Region X (8.0%).
- Between 2002 and 2013, the proportion of youth who ever thought of committing suicide did not change in Caraga. The region registers the highest percentage of youth who ever thought of committing suicide (13.8 %).
- For the same period, the percentage who attempted to commit suicide increased substantially, contradicting the declining national trajectory.

- Considerable proportions of Caraga youth have experienced physical violence both as aggressors (25.4%) and as victims (17.3%).
- One in twenty Caraga youth has been a victim of harassment through modern technology.

Sources of information about sex

- More than a third of Caraga youth do not have any source of information about sex.
- Friends of the same sex, medical professionals, and mothers are the most preferred sources of information about sex and reproduction.
- Only 43.4 percent reported that they can find help in school regarding sex-related problems.
- Only one in ten Caraga youth has discussed sex at home while growing up.
- Most discussions of sex at home are between fathers and sons and mothers and daughters.

Sex and media

- One in three youth has read pornographic materials (38.1 percent among males and 27.1 percent among females). The proportion of youth who have read pornographic materials has declined from 34.6 percent in 2002 to 32.6 percent in 2013.
- More than three in five youth have watched x-rated movies and videos (83.8 percent among males and 48.8 percent among females). The proportion of youth who have watched x-rated movies and videos has sharply increased from 44.9 percent in 2002 to 66.7 percent in 2013.
- The youth also engage in other media-related sexual activities.
 - 13.5 percent have visited websites with sexually-explicit content
 - One in five has sent or received sex videos through cellphones or internet
 - 8.7 percent have engaged in phone sex
 - 3.5 percent had sex with someone they met online or through text messages
 - 1.2 percent have recorded himself/herself having sex

Sexual risks

- Two in five Caraga youth ages 15-24 have sexual experience, about the same level as for the Philippines overall.
- The youth's sexual debut is getting younger as indicated by the mean age at first sex which declined from 18.2 years in 2002 to 17.5 years in 2013 for both males and females.

- Increased proportion of youth who engage in early sex, particularly among females
 - The proportion of male youth who have engaged in sex before age 15 slightly decreased from 2.1 percent in 2002 to 1.9 percent in 2013. However, for females, there was a sharp increase from 1.7 percent in 2002 to 2.8 percent in 2013.
 - The proportion of youth ages 18-24 who have engaged in sex before age 18 more than doubled from 13 percent in 2002 to 26.7 percent in 2013 for the males. The corresponding figures for the females nearly tripled from 10.9 percent to 31.9 percent within the same period.
- One in three Caraga youth aged 15-24 in 2013 had engaged in sex before marriage (prevalence level of premarital sex among Caraga youth is slightly above the national level). This is almost double from the level of 17.1 percent from 10 years ago.
- Narrowing gap in levels of premarital sex between males and females over time
- Most of the premarital sexual encounters are unprotected against unintended pregnancy and/or STIs, i.e., 85.5 percent of the first premarital sex encounters are unprotected. Withdrawal is the most common method used among those who used some methods of contraception.
- Low level of commercial sex most of which are unprotected (one percent paid for sex and 1.2 percent received payment for sex).
- Four percent of the youth engage in casual sex, with low level of protection
- 1.8 percent of the youth, mostly males also have FUBU (fuck buddies).
- 4.5 percent have had sex with a fellow male
- 1.8 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 3.5 percent in 2002 to 13 percent in 2013
 - The percent of females 15-19 who are pregnant with the first child increased from 0.6 percent in 2002 to 3.7 percent in 2013
 - Percent of females 15-19 who have begun childbearing more than quadrupled from 4.1 percent in 2002 to 17.3 percent in 2013, the fourth highest in the country
- The proportion of women who have begun childbearing generally increases with age, i.e., from 2.4 percent among those aged 15 to 41.7 percent among those aged 19.

HIV-AIDS

The proportion of youth who have heard of AIDS has significantly declined from 96.1 percent in 2002 to 87.7 percent in 2013.

- Caraga youth have moderate level of knowledge about HIV transmission prevention methods
 - 69 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
 - 56.8 percent agree that the risk of HIV transmission can be reduced by using a condom every time they have sex
 - 60 percent agree that a healthy looking person can have HIV
 - 66.1 percent agree that a person cannot get HIV from mosquito bites
 - 39.8 percent agree that a person cannot get HIV by sharing food with someone who is infected
 - 44.4 percent think that AIDS is curable
- More than three in five youth feel invincible to AIDS, i.e., they think there is no chance of them getting AIDS.

