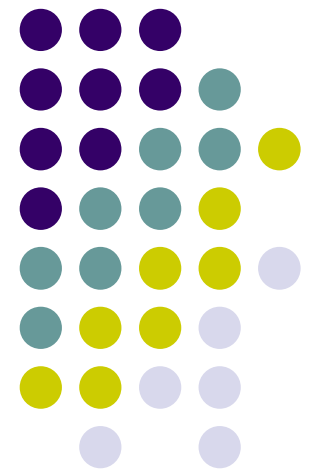


Adolescent and youth reproductive health

Issues, Programmes & Operational barriers

Authors: Aparnaa Somanathan, Vindya
Eriyagama, Ruwanthi Elwalagedara





Key questions

- What are key RH issues affecting adolescents and youth in Sri Lanka?
- How have the government and NGO sector responded to the needs of adolescents?
- What are the barriers to ensuring that adolescents have adequate access to ARH services and information?
- What are some ways of improving government health policy towards A&YRH services?



Who are Adolescents

- Adolescence?

A transitional period from childhood to adulthood



Outline

- Background
- RH issues affecting adolescents and youth
- Existing programmes and policies on A&YRH
- Operational barriers to A&YRH
- Policy recommendations



Outline

- Background
- A & YRH issues in Sri Lanka
- Existing programmes and policies on A&YRH
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- Policy recommendations

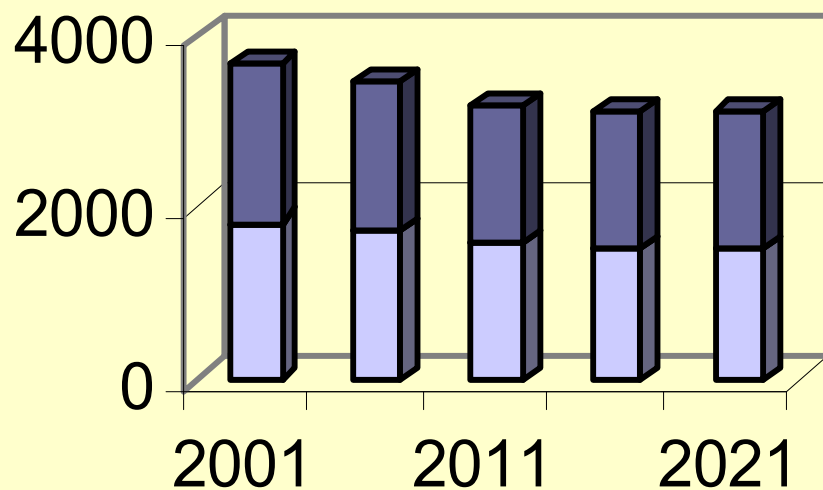


Background

- In 2002 19.7% or 3.7 million of Sri Lankan population were adolescents
- It is estimated that the number will decrease to 3.1 million by 2021
- Focus on A & YRH is important in SL context.
- Knowledge and services will allow adolescents and youth to make informed decisions relating to sexual & RH matters



Total adolescent population (ages 15-24 years), 2001-2021



□ Female ■ Male

Source: Population projections for Sri Lanka by Prof. I W De Silva

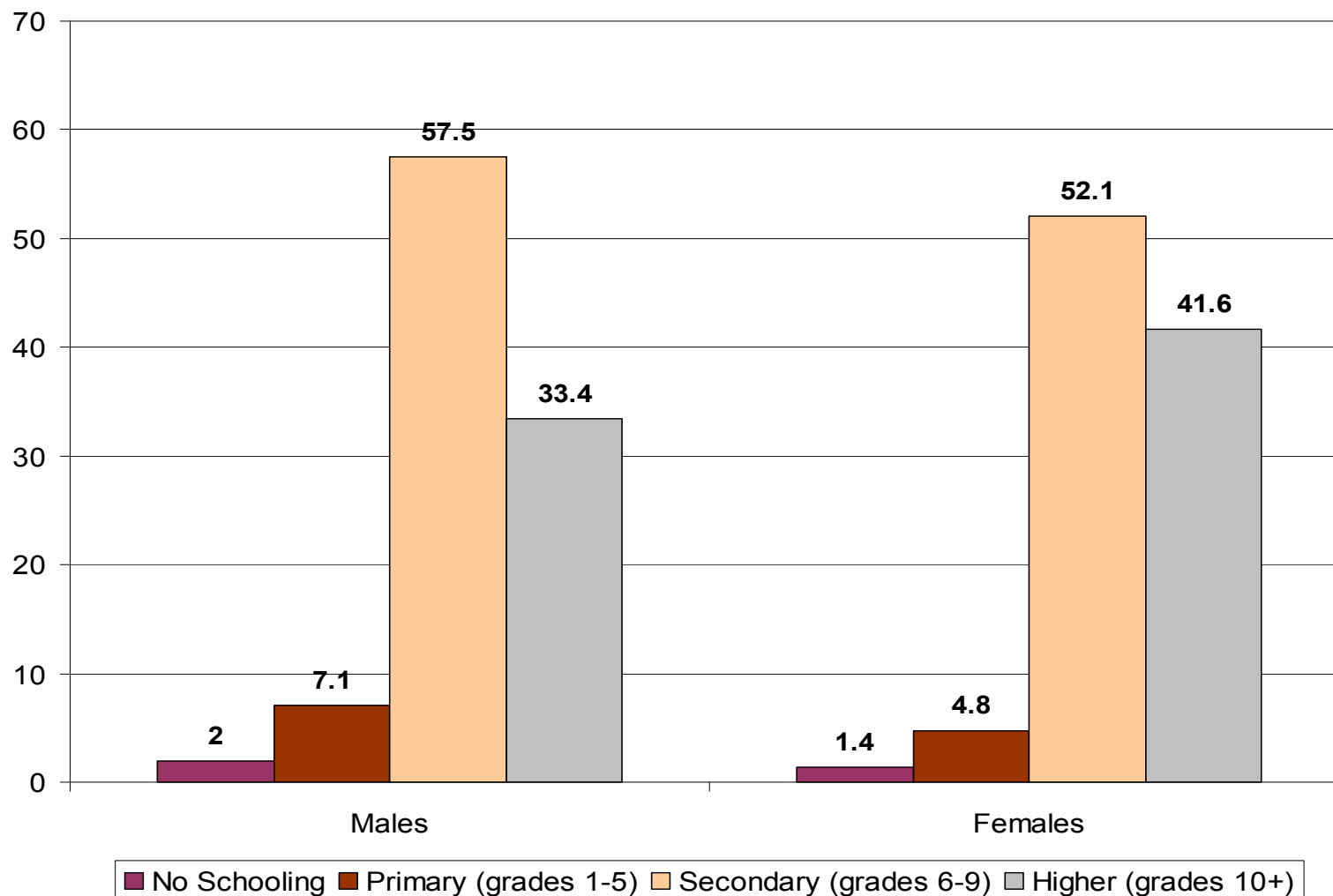
Profile of Adolescents in SL



- Education
- Employment
- Marriage



Years of Education completed 2003/04 (percent) (Ages 15-24)



Source: *The consumer finance and socio economic survey report 2003/2004.*

Central Bank of Sri Lanka

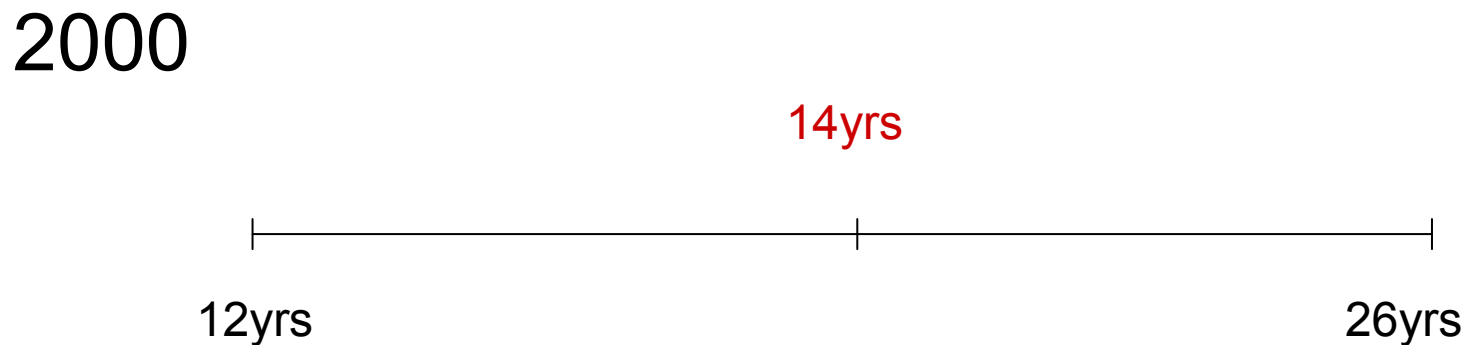
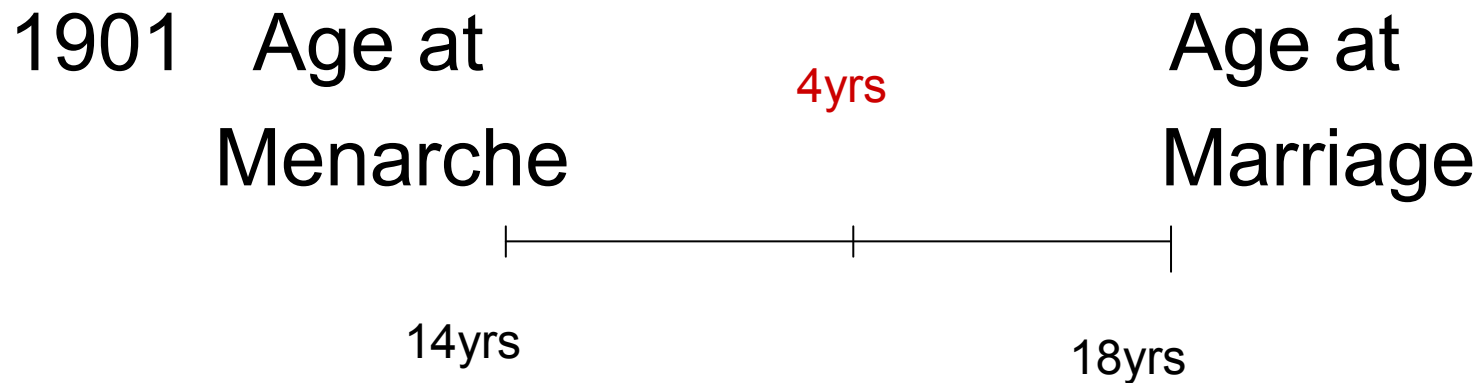


Employment by sex, 2003 ('000) (Ages 15-24)



Source: Labor force survey 2003. The Department of Census and Statistics. Sri Lanka

Risk Taking Period: Sri Lanka





Outline

- Background
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- Operational barriers to A&YRH
- Policy recommendations

A & YRH Issues



- **Early, High risk pregnancy**
- **Unwanted pregnancy**
unwanted pregnancy among adolescents in SL is exceptionally low by international standards
- **Abortion**
Illegal, unsafe, on the rise (150,000-175,000 performed annually)
- **HIV/AIDS/STDs**
On the rise, and primarily a concern because of poor awareness among high risk groups (i.e. workers in free trade zones, in tourist industry, commercial sex workers, displaced persons)
- **Sexual abuse**
About 10% of early adolescents and 14% of mid and late adolescents admitted to have been sexually abused



Outline

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- Policy recommendations

A&YRH programmes



- School – based health education
- Community – based interventions
- National Youth Campaign
- Telephone hotlines
- Peer education

- NGO programmes
- Operations research
- Programs beyond health





Outline

- Background
- A & YRH issues in Sri Lanka
- Existing programmes and policies on A&YRH
- **Operational barriers to A&YRH**
- Policy recommendations

Operational Barriers to A & YRH



- Lack of knowledge and public awareness about ARH issues

REASONS:

- Lack of human resources with necessary skills and experience on RH issues
- Cultural factors have limited open discussion of issues → difficult for “safe” channels of information to develop



Inability to obtain services

- There are very few, if any, reproductive clinics or centres from which adolescents can obtain services.
- Public provision of contraceptives targets married couples almost exclusively

REASONS:

- Lack of public awareness → lack of understanding of the gravity of the issue in the community → little impetus for strong policy action
- General lack of resources in the health sector



Lack of research

- Lack of research on A&YRH and the needs of adolescents and youth, particularly among underserved and minority groups

CONSEQUENCES:

- Scarce data and knowledge → severity of A&YRH issues is not known to public → weak political commitment for coherent policy initiatives



Outline

- Existing programmes and policies on A&YRH
- Operational barriers to A&YRH
- **Policy recommendations**



Policy recommendations

- A more holistic approach to A&YRH : health and education sectors + legislative action to influence risk taking behaviour
- Capitalizing on political support in establishing programmes that support A & YRH services.
- Provision of information to adolescents: Importance of school-based programmes cannot be overstated
- Improve pre-marital counselling
- Work through the pharmacy network
- Conduct research on sexual behaviour and special population groups



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