

## Gender differences in youth reproductive health knowledge in Sri Lanka

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The main objective of this paper is to examining gender differences in youth reproductive health (RH) knowledge in Sri Lanka. 'Youth' can be considered as the most productive age period in life. The current National Youth Policy of Sri Lanka defines 'youth' as persons between 15 and 29 years. Those in youth age cohorts require sufficient reproductive health knowledge to enhance their health and wellbeing, irrespective of their gender. This study is based on literature that has been published between year 2000 and 2014. Literature identifies significant gender differences in terms of youth reproductive health knowledge and behaviour. The findings reveal that fertility behavior of youth differs by residential sector. Never married proportion is relatively high in the 15-19 age group, and urban sector male youth reports the highest percentage of unmarried. In all youth age cohorts, i.e. 15-19, 20-24, and 25-29, the married proportion of male youth is relatively low compared to their female counterparts. 'Mother' was identified as the most common person with whom youth liked to discuss their RH matters. However, the proportion who preferred mother differed by gender and for males the mother was replaced with peers. Most male youth favored peers to discuss RH issues in contrast to females whose most preferred person was the mother. The findings further reveal that basic knowledge about sperm production is poor among both males and females however, more than half of the youth were knowledgeable about ova production, irrespective of gender. There are also gender differences in knowledge about conception. The findings suggest that youth reproductive health programmes should focus more on enhancing RH knowledge among both male and female youth. However, such programmes need to address issues related to RH knowledge within their socio-cultural contexts.

**Keywords:** *Reproductive health knowledge, youth reproductive health, gender differences*

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