

Analysis of the Contemporary Situation of Illicit Alcohol Consumption in Sri Lanka

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Illicit alcohol “Kassippu” consumption is a serious threat in Sri Lankan community causing many deaths, especially in low-income families and common among both male and females. Excessive use of illicit alcohol can lead to physical, psychological and social harm since it contains methanol, a lethal substance in the brew in varying proportions. There are more than 200,000 illicit alcohol outlets operating in the country and about 5,000 manufacturers. Thus, an investigation was carried out by the President’s Task Force to see whether the consumption has decreased or increased between 2015 to 2017. Two methods have been followed where the President’s Task Force (a) collected information from 228 out of 332 divisional secretariats through the respective divisional secretary (b) and collected information from 438 police stations in all nine provinces from the Officer in Charge of the relevant police station. A questionnaire was used to collect information to see whether the illicit alcohol consumption is low, moderate or high. The relevant highest officer in charge has certified the data collection. The results clearly show that the consumption of illicit alcohol in all provinces, percent mean for low, moderate and high was 51.5, 30.5, and 18.0 respectively. In the divisional secretariats, percent mean for low, moderate and high was 54.1, 33.6, and 12.3 respectively. Both methods show comparable results and a drastic decrease in 2017 since 2015. Especially high consumption category shows a 47.8% decrease ($p < 0.0001$, CI 95%). Eastern, Northern and Uva provinces show high percentages of low consumption in both cases while the Western province shows a high percentage for high consumption as for police data. The study concluded that there is a decrease in illicit alcohol consumption between 2015 and 2017 in Sri Lanka in almost all provinces where North, East and Uva provinces show a dramatic decrease.

Keywords: Illicit alcohol, President’s Task Force, Divisional secretariats, Police stations