



2022 TREND SURVEY ON **TOBACCO**

Annual Trend Survey on
Tobacco Consumption in
Sri Lanka

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Sri Lanka 2022

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Abbreviations

ADIC	Alcohol & Drug Information Centre
UN	United Nations
BAT	British American Tobacco
CTC	Ceylon Tobacco Company
COVID-19	Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2)
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
NCD	Non-Communicable Diseases

Executive Summary

Alcohol and Drug Information Centre (ADIC), Sri Lanka conducts trend surveys annually for tobacco since 1998. The trend survey analysis (also known as the SPOT Survey) is conducted under the main aim of mapping and tracing current trends of tobacco consumption across Sri Lanka. This report presents the findings of the trend survey for the year 2022 which was aimed at determining trends of tobacco consumption across the country thereby assisting policymakers in formulating effective tobacco policies that aid reduction and prevention of tobacco use.

Data was collected through a survey administered among the population of males above 15 years of age across 11 selected districts in Sri Lanka. Data analysis and results were formulated based on the responses obtained from a total of 2745 respondents who matched the inclusion criteria. From the study participants, 25.4% were current smokers. This is a slight increment compared to the previous year (24.2%). This slight change may not be considered when making major conclusions as the economic crisis that started in the beginning of March 2022, has had a major impact on the lifestyle of people, affecting their social behaviour.

The sample was divided into three age groups for analysis, namely, 15-24 years, 25-39 years and 40 years and above. The majority of the users consumed tobacco on a daily basis. The highest tobacco consumption rates were reported from the age category 40 years and above, which was consistent with previous trend surveys.

Cigarette was the most prominently consumed tobacco product among the majority of the current smokers, regardless of their age group and district. Beedi was consumed at a lower rate within all age groups, districts and occupational categories. When considering the district-wise comparison, Nuwara Eliya reported the highest tobacco consumption rate (32.8%), while Kilinochchi reported the lowest rate (17.8%). Initiation of tobacco use has occurred mostly during the age 18-20 years (43.4%), and the most common type of tobacco product consumed at initiation was cigarettes. Majority of the users have initiated consuming tobacco products with friends and at parties, which shows that peer influence and pleasurable environment had mostly accounted for tobacco initiation.

Only 10% of the respondents had been successful in quitting tobacco consumption at the time of administering the survey, which indicates that the majority of the sample has not been able to quit. The reasons for quitting tobacco use were different among the three age groups. However, financial issues and change in prices were the two most common factors for quitting, while some respondents mentioned health issues as well.

The study findings emphasize the need of tobacco taxation, pricing policies and effective tobacco prevention strategies to reduce tobacco initiations and overall tobacco use in the country. The study also provides a platform for further discussions on the importance of delaying or preventing initiation and banning sales of tobacco products for underage persons.

1. Introduction

Tobacco consumption is one of the main factors which negatively affects achievement of the sustainable development goals adopted by the United Nations (UN) by 2030, which aims to reduce tobacco-related deaths by one-third by that time¹. In Sri Lanka, the Ministry of Health has reported that tobacco kills around 20,000 people annually which is about 57 deaths per day². Tobacco use in Sri Lanka has been reduced to 9.1%, making it a leading nation in reduced tobacco usage³. But still, LKR 40 million is spent daily on cigarettes, causing it to become a heavy burden to the country's economy. British American Tobacco (BAT), the monopoly controlling 84% of the shares of Ceylon Tobacco Company (CTC) gains the majority of the profits obtained by CTC.

Sri Lanka's present economic and political crisis has casted great hardship upon its citizens and has created the greatest provocation to the government. Various factors, mainly economic mishandling have contributed to the prevailing crisis. While tax reductions, money creation, and national policy shift towards organic and biological farming have been serious causal factors of the current crisis, additional factors such as the Easter bomb attacks, and the COVID-19 virus also played a significant role in advancing the prevailing issues in the country⁴. The ongoing crisis entails record levels of inflation, a depletion of foreign reserves, rapidly depreciating currency, inability to pay for imports, and increasing interest rates by the central bank. In May 2022, Sri Lanka defaulted on its debt for the first time in its history and consumer price inflation rate breached 50 per cent⁵.

Under such circumstances, a large revenue can be generated by increasing the tax for tobacco products alone, without elevating the prices of essential goods to levels that are unbearable for the general public. Significantly increasing tobacco excise taxes and prices has been identified as the single most effective and cost-effective strategy for reducing tobacco use⁶. Furthermore, there is a need to address the issues related to tobacco use among individuals to improve their awareness on tobacco harm and take required steps to improve the economic status within families and communities.

Therefore, the year 2022 tobacco trend survey findings put emphasis on the need to implement and facilitate the policy development, awareness programmes, and stronger institutional capacities at the community and national level to efficiently address the tobacco consumption and its harm on people's life.

¹https://www.google.com/search?q=UN&rlz=1C1CHWL_enLK991LK991&oq=UN&aqs=chrome..69i57j69i59j35i39j69i59j0i131i433j46i131i433i512j0i131i433i512j46i433i512j0i131i433i512j46i433.609j0j15&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8

²<https://adicsrilanka.org/tobacco-fact-sheet-2020/>

³http://www.statistics.gov.lk/Resource/en/OtherCensusandSurveys/SurveyReports/SLK_GATS_2019_2020%20Factsheet.pdf

⁴ George, A., George, S., Basker, T. (2022). Sri Lanka's Economic Crisis: A Brief Overview. Partners Universal International Research Journal. 01(02), pp.9-16. [Online]. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/361571361_Sri_Lanka's_Economic_Crisis_A_Brief_Overview/link.

⁵ Kataria, A., Manur, A., Pradhan, s. (2022). Sri Lanka's Economic Crisis: Takshashila Case Study. [Online]. Available at: <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/618a55c4cb03246776b68559/t/630b994699ba8e6bb2c7a5b4/1661704524368/TCS+Sri+Lanka+Economic+Crisis+V1.1+26August2022.pdf>

⁶ <https://www.who.int/activities/raising-taxes-on-tobacco>

1.1 Objectives

The objectives of the 2022 tobacco trend survey analysis are as follows.

- Determine different trends of tobacco use within the country in terms of different products, age groups and districts.
- Analyse the trends of tobacco use and compare the results with surveys conducted in previous years.
- Identify the underlying attitudes and reasons for using tobacco among different age groups, and districts.
- Determine the age of initiating tobacco use.

2. Methodology

2.1 Study method

The trend survey for the year 2022 was conducted following the same methodology which has been continued for the past two decades, to keep the consistency of the results. However, this had been a challenging time period due to the economic crisis in the country, which led to a drastic increase in all costs and emergence of issues such as fuel shortages. But the challenges were successfully met, with the engagement of data collectors in all locations who have been specifically trained and have been working with ADIC for a long period of time.

2.2 Study locations

The survey was conducted in 11 districts in Sri Lanka. The districts which were selected as study locations were Jaffna, Matara, Monaragala, Trincomalee, Rathnapura, Nuwara Eliya, Polonnaruwa, Kalutara, Puttalam, Kilinochchi and Colombo.

2.3 Sampling

2.3.1 Sample Design

Same as in the previous years, multi-stage sample design was used in the study.

2.3.2 Inclusion Criteria

Male population above 15 years of age who were residing in Sri Lanka at the time of the survey were included as respondents for the study.

2.3.3 Exclusion Criteria

Females were not included in the study as consumption rate of tobacco products among females is relatively less compared to males in Sri Lanka. Males who were under 15 years and any Individuals who were not residing in the selected districts at the time of the study, were excluded from the survey.

2.3.4 Sample Size

From each district, 250 participants were included in the survey. Therefore, the total sample size was 2750 from all 11 districts.

2.3.5 Sampling Method

Firstly, through a randomized batch selection process, one district was selected from each of the nine administrative provinces in Sri Lanka, to obtain a representative sample of the whole country. This procedure was repeated three times to select three batches of districts out of which two were included in the previous surveys in the years 2020 and 2021. The third batch was used in the current survey for the year 2022. Colombo and Jaffna districts are automatically included as important districts every year. With this inclusion, 11 districts were included in total, in the survey.

In the next stage of sampling, age was divided into three sub-groups as 15-24 years, 25-39 years, and 40 years and above, to obtain a representative sample of males above 15 years. Since it was found from the previous surveys that the first two age groups have lower usage, it was purposively oversampled. Therefore, the planned sample allocation for the chosen age groups were 40%, 40% and 20% respectively. This was determined based on population figures from the census and statistics. However exact sample size might have had slight variations during the study.

Table 1: Planned allocation of survey participants

Age group	Sample allocation	Per district	Per age group
15 – 24 Years	40%	100	1100
24 – 39 Years	40%	100	1100
40 Years and above	20%	50	550
Total	100%	250	2750

2.4 Data Collection

Data collection was carried out using an interviewer-administered questionnaire, which contained 37 questions in total (Annex 1). The first five questions were developed for gathering demographic information of the study participants. Few questions were reserved for the contemporary issues directly affecting alcohol and tobacco use. The rest of them were composite questions which were developed to obtain information regarding both alcohol and tobacco consumption. The questionnaire was initially prepared in Sinhala and later translated into Tamil. Both Sinhala and Tamil questionnaires were administered in the field according to the language preference of the respondents.

Data collection was carried out by trained data collectors and the survey was conducted in September 2022.

2.5 Data Analysis

Data collected by the survey was analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and figures that represent trends were compiled using Microsoft Excel.

Trends of tobacco use were analysed in different aspects and the following terminologies were defined and used for this purpose. Three groups, namely, current smokers, last 30-day abstainers and lifetime abstainers were identified. '**Current smokers**' were defined as individuals who have consumed tobacco within the past 30 days at the time the survey was administered, while '**last 30-day abstainers**' were individuals who had consumed tobacco all long, however, have abstained during the past 30 days at the time of the survey. Individuals who have never consumed tobacco in their lifetime were referred to as '**lifetime abstainers**'. Apart from initiation and cessation, the rest of the study results were obtained based on the responses of current smokers. Therefore, the key analysis of this report is based on the responses of current smokers.

3. Results

3.1 Survey responses based on district

A total of 2745 valid responses from males above 15 years were received with an overall response rate of 100.0%. However, the response rate for each question may vary from the overall sample. A summary of the status of responses from all 11 districts is stated below.

Table 2: Survey responses based on district

District	Province	Age Group			Total
		15-24	25-39	>=40	
Colombo	Western	87	124	39	250
		34.8%	49.6%	15.6%	100.0%
Kilinochchi	Northern	87	109	52	248
		35.1%	44.0%	21.0%	100.0%
Puttalam	North-Western	88	112	50	250
		35.2%	44.8%	20.0%	100.0%
Kalutara	Western	93	116	41	250
		37.2%	46.4%	16.4%	100.0%
Polonnaruwa	North Central	85	124	41	250
		34.0%	49.6%	16.4%	100.0%
Nuwara Eliya	Central	89	105	44	238
		37.4%	44.1%	18.5%	100.0%
Rathnapura	Sabaragamuwa	91	119	40	250
		36.4%	47.6%	16.0%	100.0%
Trincomalee	Eastern	62	145	48	255
		24.3%	56.9%	18.8%	100.0%
Monaragala	Sabaragamuwa	96	110	44	250
		38.4%	44.0%	17.6%	100.0%
Matara	Southern	88	121	41	250
		35.2%	48.4%	16.4%	100.0%
Jaffna	Northern	72	106	76	254
		28.3%	41.7%	29.9%	100.0%
Total		938	1291	516	2745
		34.2%	47.0%	18.8%	100.0%

3.2 Demographic Information of the study participants

This section consists of the demographic information of the survey respondents. It represents the distribution of respondents based on the age categories, level of education and occupational sector.

3.2.1 Survey responses based on age

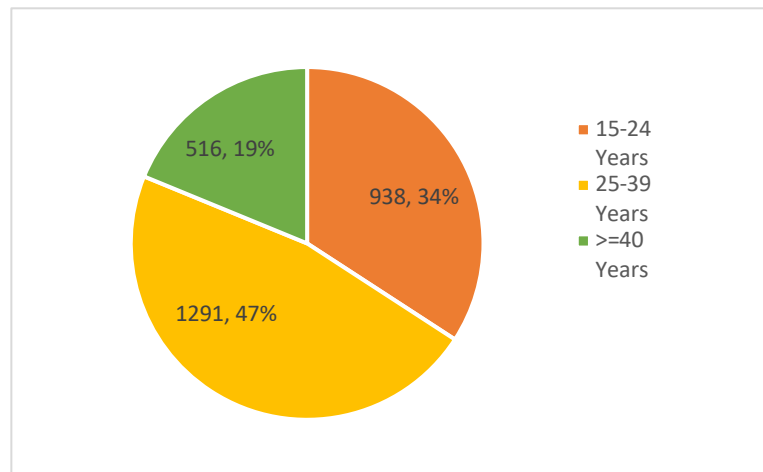


Figure 1: Survey responses based on age

From the respondents, the majority (47%) belonged to the age group 25-39 years. 34% were in the age group 15-24 years and 19% were in the age group 40 years and above. These figures showed a slight deviation from the initially allocated figures.

3.2.2 Survey responses based on education level

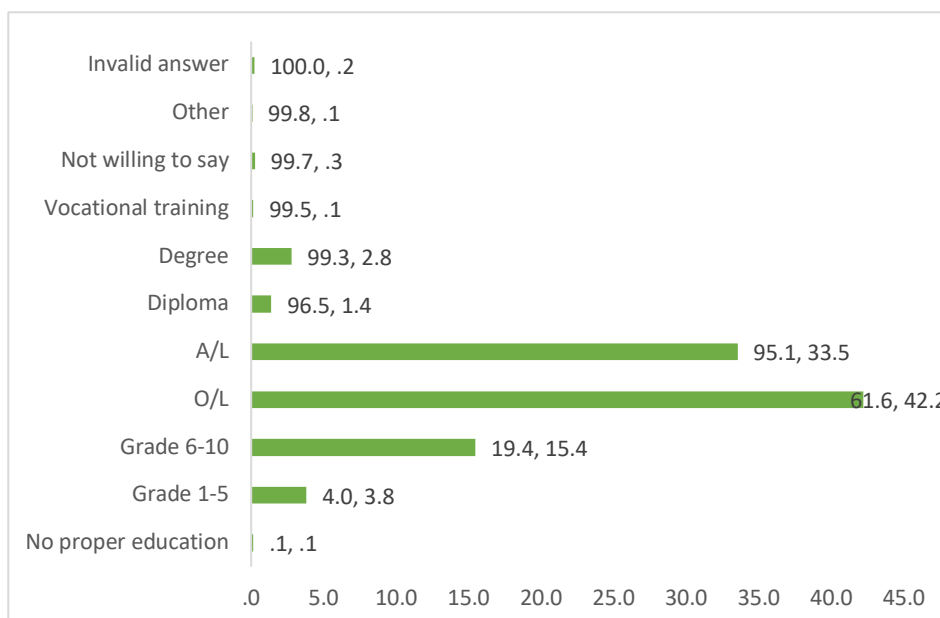


Figure 2: Survey responses based on education level

The respondents belonged to various education levels. The highest percentage of respondents (42.2%) stated that they have completed G.C.E. Ordinary Level (O/L) while 33.5% of the respondents have completed G.C.E. Advance Level (A/L). Apart from that, 15.4% have only continued their education only up to grade 6-10. The sample also consisted of Degree (2.8%) and Diploma (1.4%) holders.

3.2.3 Occupation sector of the survey respondents

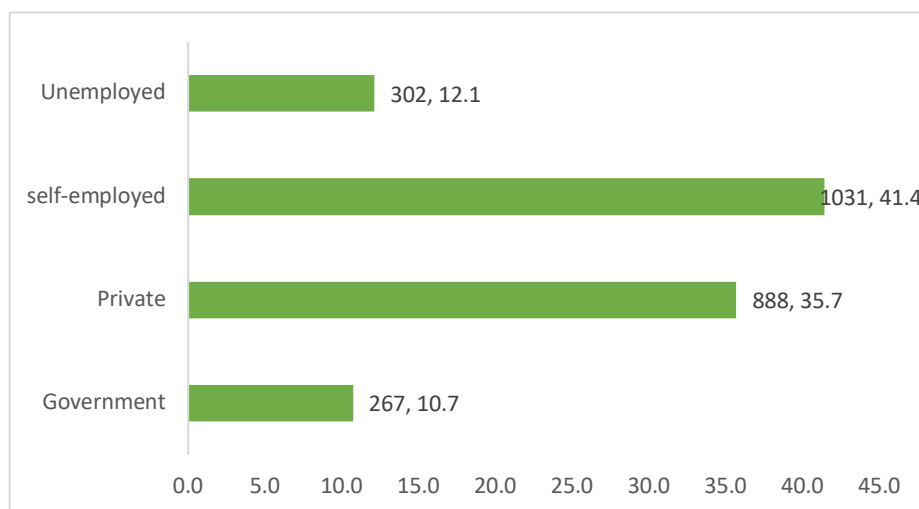


Figure 3: Occupation sector of respondents

The highest percentage of the survey respondents were self-employed (41.4%), while the second highest percentage was reported in the private sector (35.7%). From the respondents, 12.1% were unemployed, and the lowest percentage (10.7%) were reported in the government sector.

3.3 Results obtained from the survey

3.3.1 Status of tobacco consumption among the study respondents

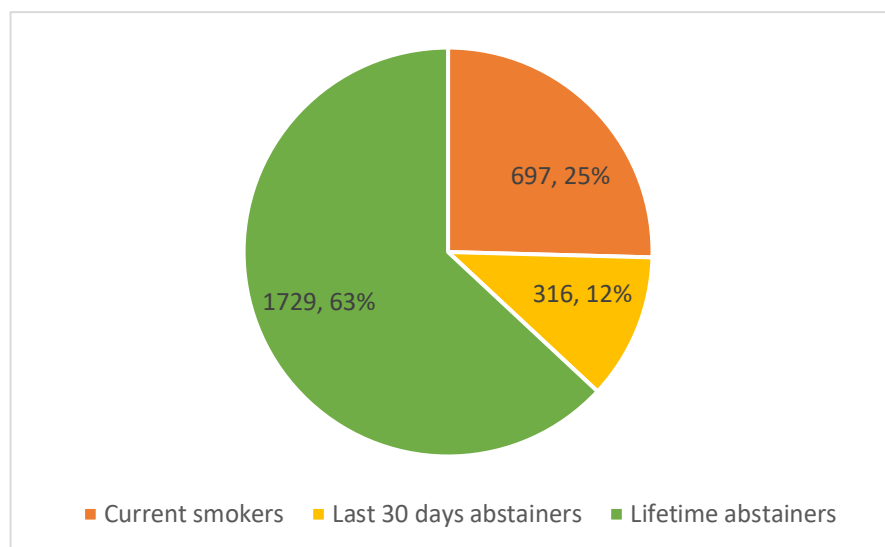


Figure 4: Status of tobacco consumption

According to the survey findings, more than half of the respondents were lifetime abstainers (59.4%). Only 25.3% of the respondents were found out to be current smokers, while 15.3% had reported that they had not consumed tobacco during the last 30 days at the time of the survey.

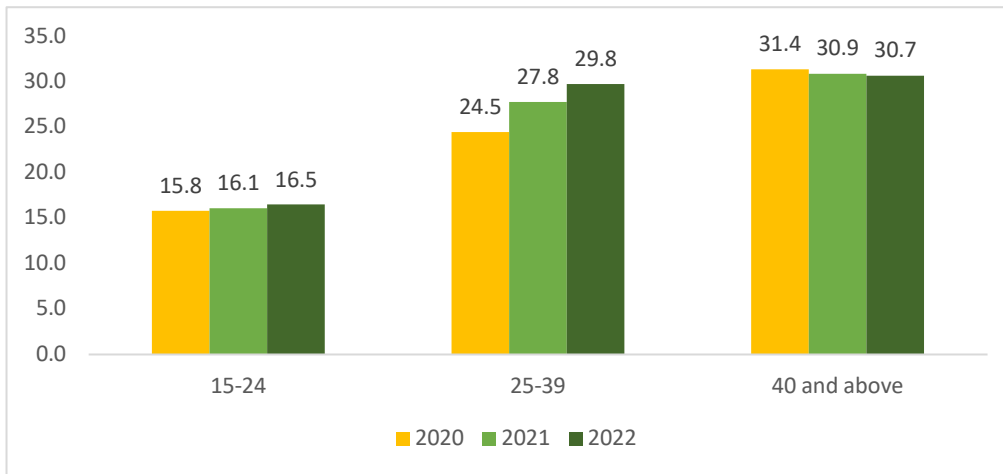


Figure 5: Comparison of tobacco use within the 3 age groups among 3 consecutive years

The above figure shows a comparison of the consumption of tobacco in the years 2020, 2021 and 2022. An increase in tobacco use can be observed in the 2 age groups 15-24 and 40 and above 25-39 years within the 3 years, while the age group 40 years and above show a decrease in tobacco use.

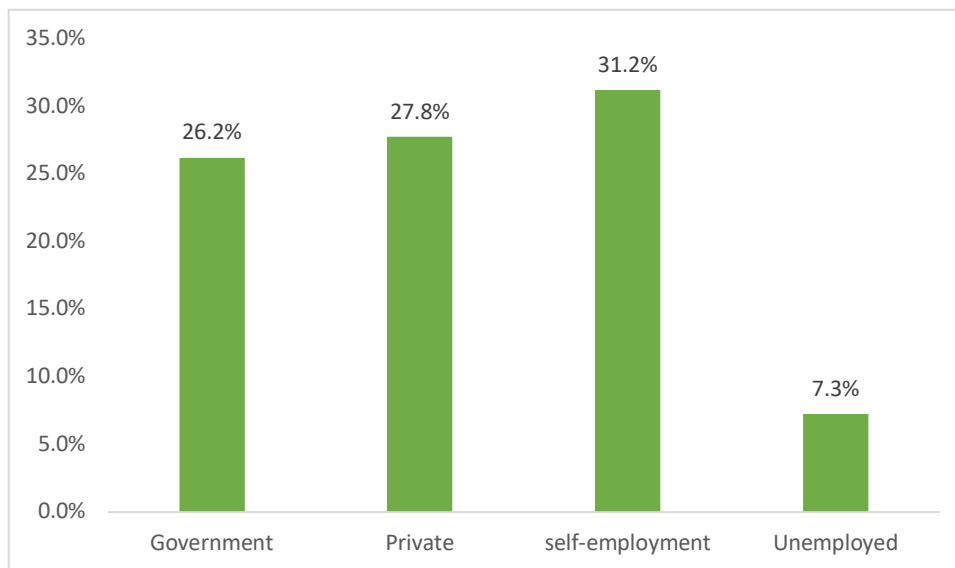


Figure 6: Tobacco consumption by occupational sector

The participants who are self-employed represented the highest percentage in tobacco consumption (31.2%), while the unemployed group reported the lowest rate (7.3%). Furthermore, the employees from the private sector represented the second largest tobacco consumption (27.8%).

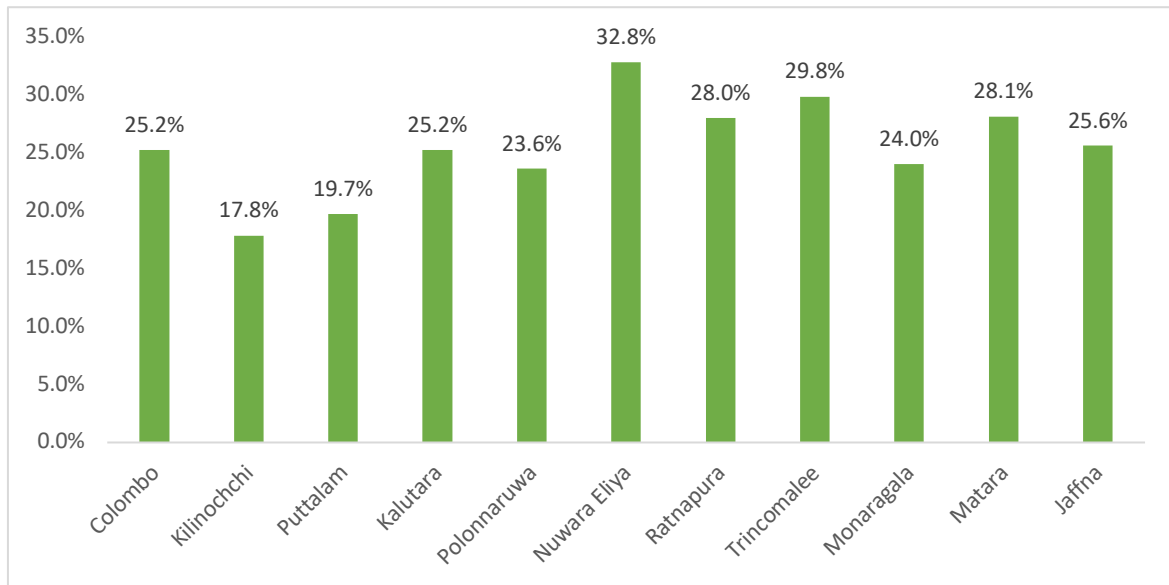


Figure 7: Status of tobacco consumption by district

When considering the districts included in the survey, the highest percentage of tobacco users was reported from Nuwara Eliya district (32.8%) while the second highest percentage was observed in Trincomalee district (29.8%). The lowest percentage of tobacco users was observed in Kilinochchi district (17.8%).

3.3.2 Frequency of tobacco use among the study respondents

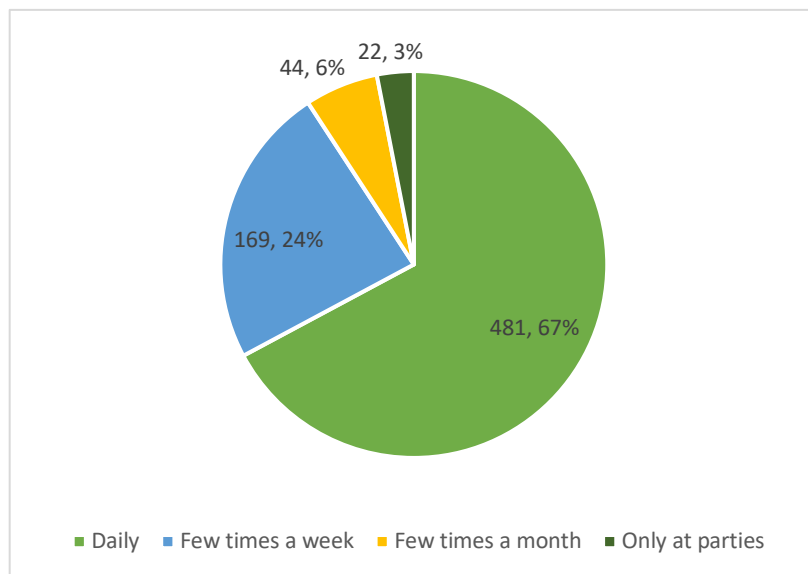


Figure 8: Frequency of tobacco use among current smokers

It was observed that the majority (67%) of the respondents were daily users while the lowest percentage of respondents (3%) used tobacco only at parties. From the participants, 24% of the users reported that they consume tobacco a few times a week, while 6% of the users consumed tobacco a few times a month.

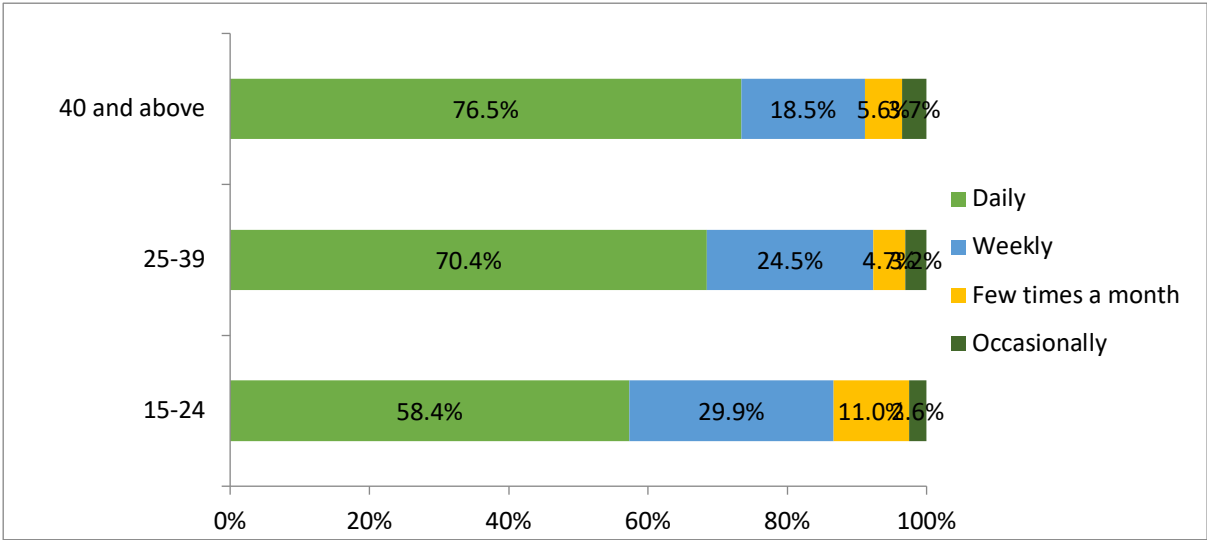


Figure 9: Frequency of tobacco consumption by age group

In all three age groups, majority of the users were daily tobacco users. The age group 40 years and above showed the highest percentage of daily tobacco use (76.5%). In all the age groups, only few percentages consumed tobacco only occasionally.

3.3.3 Types of tobacco products

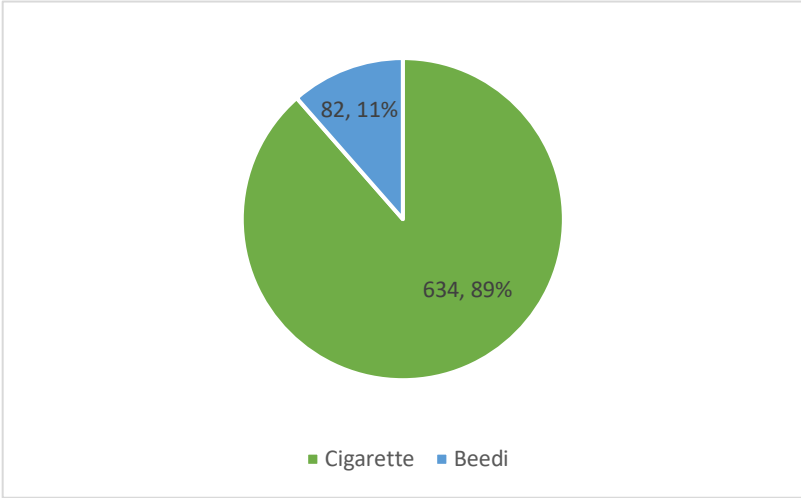


Figure 10: Tobacco consumption by type

Cigarette is the most popular type of tobacco product. Among the users, the majority of the study participants have reported the commonly consumed tobacco product as cigarettes (89%). Beedi was used by only 11% of the study respondents.

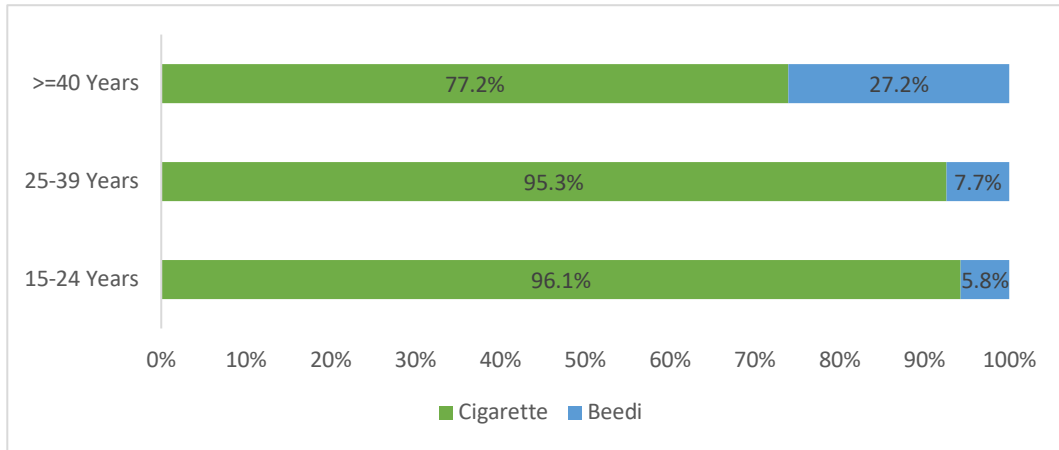


Figure 11: Types of tobacco products consumed by different age groups

Cigarettes show the highest consumption in all 3 age groups (15-24 years: 96.1%, 25-39 years: 95.3% and 40 years and above: 77.2%). Beedi was consumed only by a low percentage in all 3 age groups.

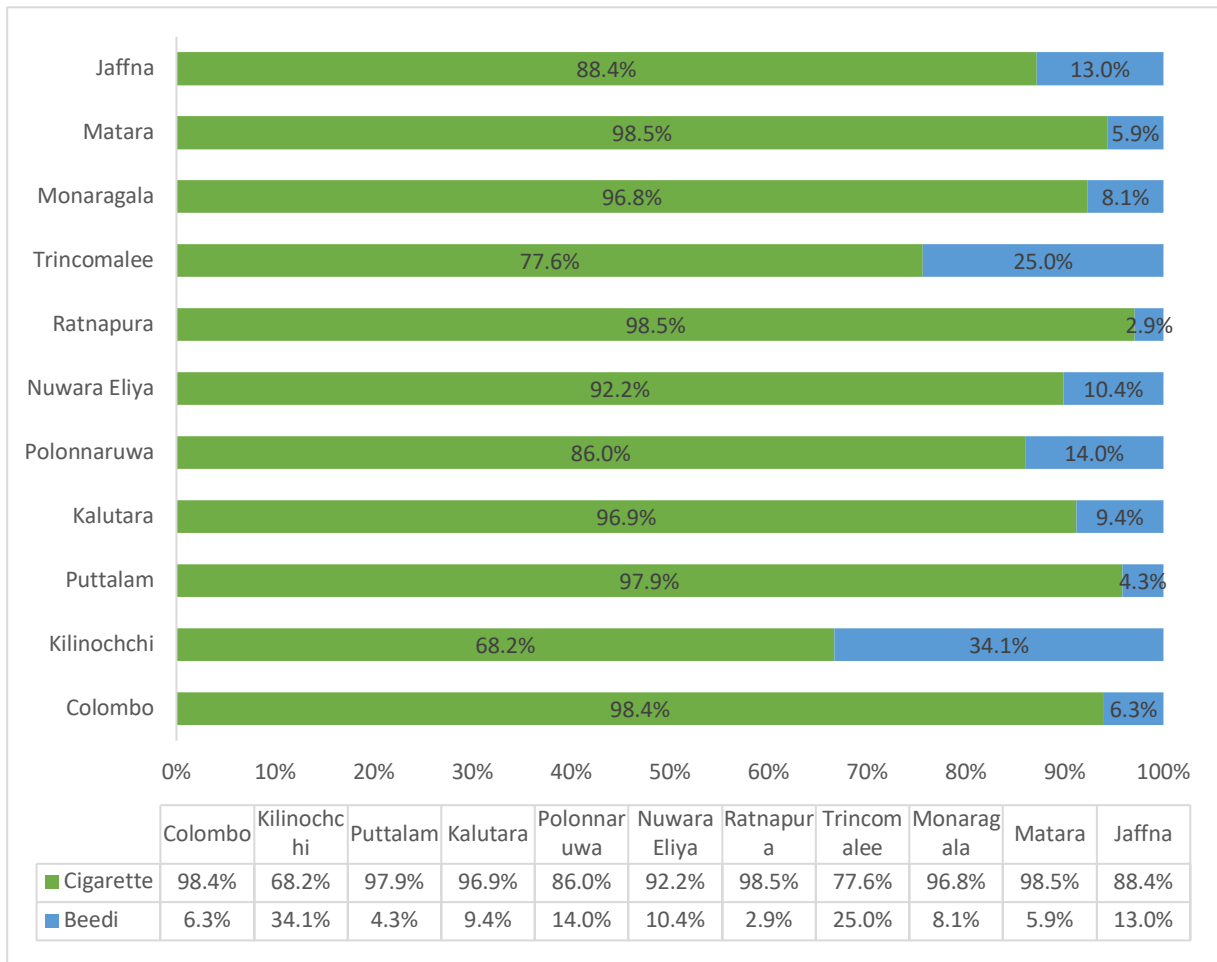


Figure 12: Tobacco products used by current smokers at district level

Cigarette was the most used tobacco product in all 11 study locations, while beedi showed a low consumption rate.

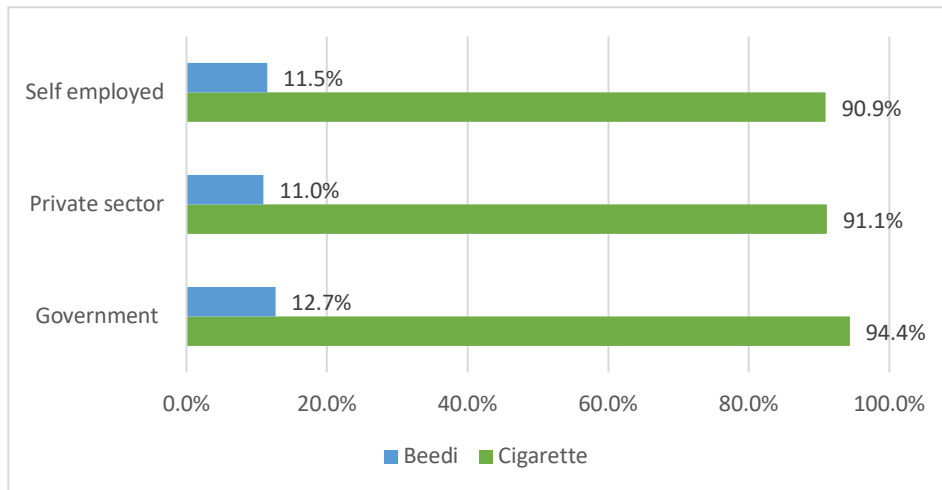


Figure 13: Consumption of tobacco products by occupational sector

Cigarette was the most commonly used product among private sector employees, government employees and self-employed individuals. The highest percentage of cigarette users was reported in the government sector (94.4%).

3.3.4 Tobacco initiation

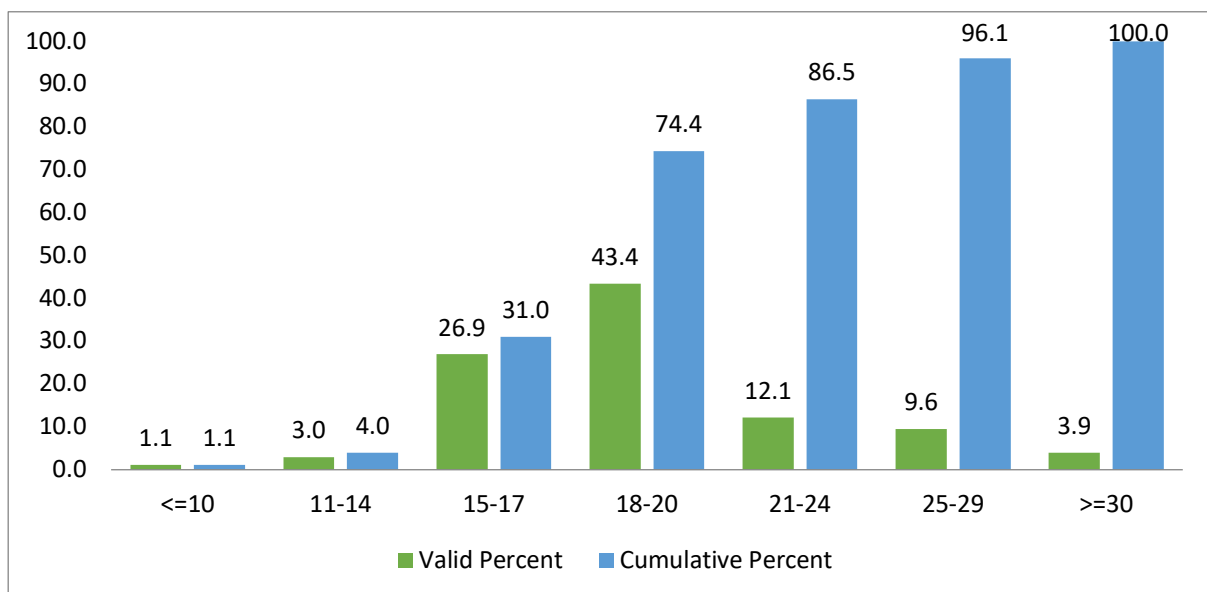


Figure 14: Tobacco initiation age

The highest percentage of initiations (43.4%) was reported at the age range of 18-20 years.

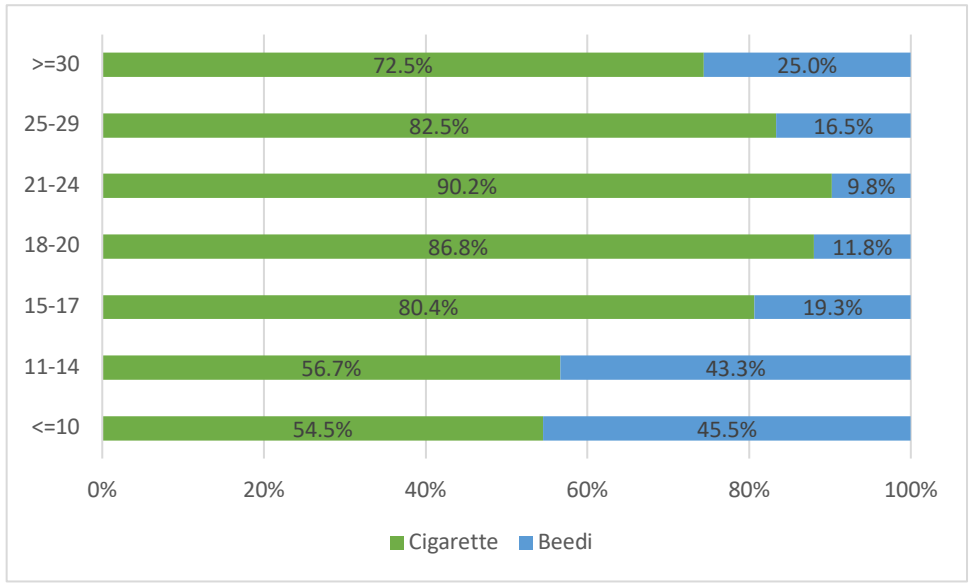


Figure 15: Type of tobacco product consumed at initiation

At the time of initiation, the highest percentage of users in all age groups have consumed cigarettes. Comparatively, beedi usage is low in all age groups.

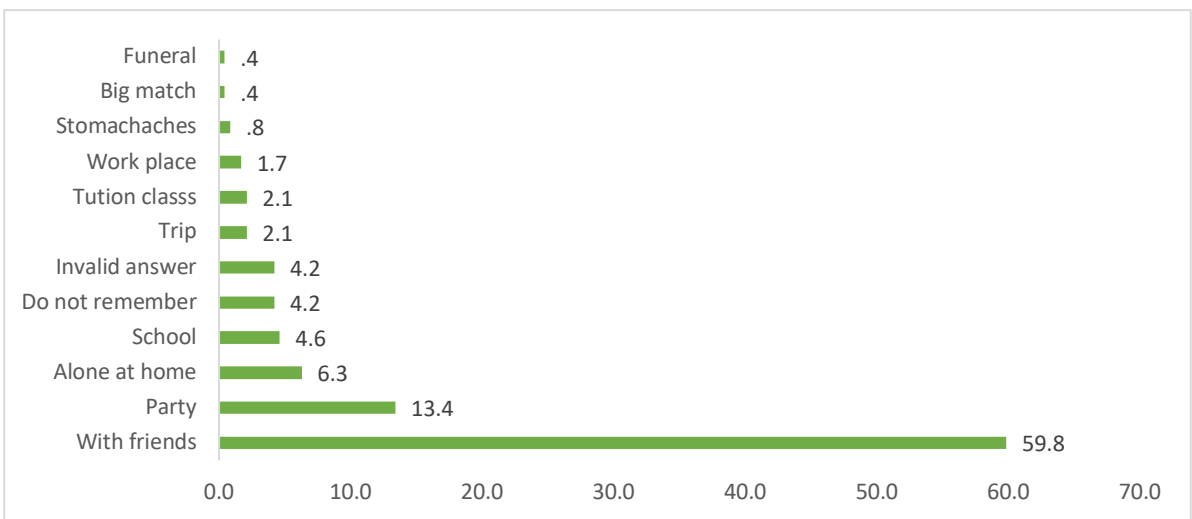


Figure 16: Tobacco initiation occasion

The highest percentage of respondents (59.8%) has reported that initiation of tobacco use occurred with friends, while several other reasons were given by other users. Parties was another common occasion which caused onset of tobacco use among 13.4% of the respondents.

3.3.5 Cessation of tobacco use

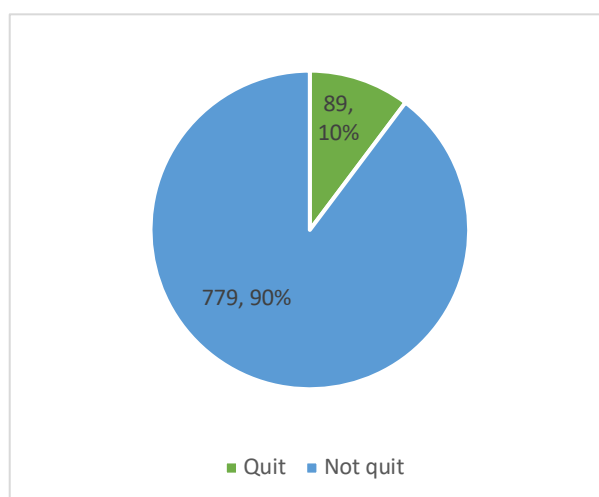


Figure 17: Quitting tobacco consumption

From the respondents, the majority was unable to quit the habit (90%), while only 10% of the current smokers have quit tobacco use at the time of the survey. In all three age groups, the percentage who were unable to quit the habit of tobacco use is quite high, compared to the percentage who have ceased smoking.

Table 3: Cessation of tobacco use by age group

	No. of respondents	Mean quit age	Std. Deviation	Min-Max
Overall	103	30.00	11.887	15-82
15-24	23	19.00	2.495	15-23
25-39	47	27.00	4.506	17-36
40 or above	33	43.00	11.385	28-82

Table 04 presents the statistical data of the quitting age of tobacco consumption. According to the statistical analysis, the mean age for tobacco cessation is 30 years.

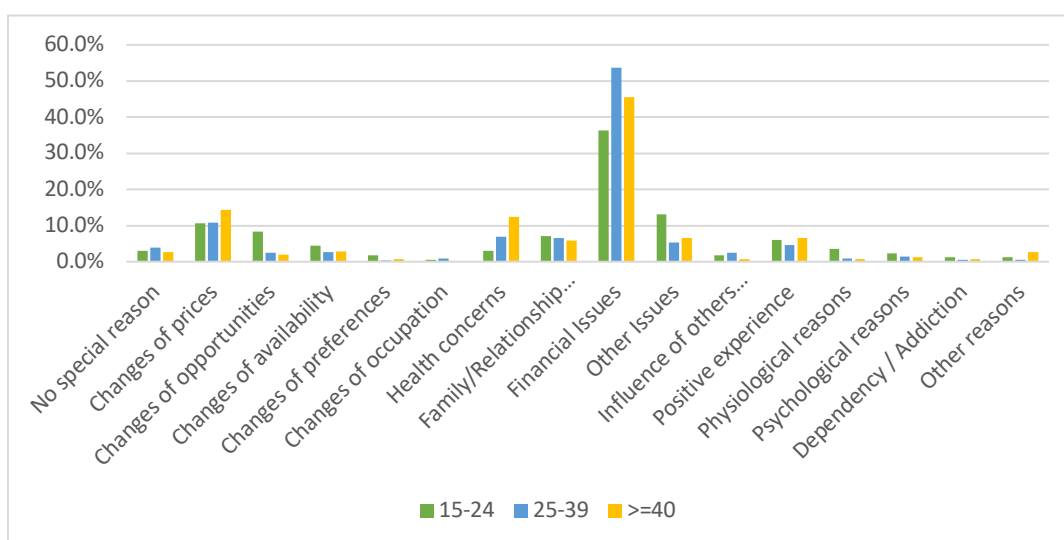


Figure 18: Reasons for quitting tobacco use

During the survey, the users in all three age groups were asked about the reasons which caused them to change their tobacco consumption pattern in the six months prior to the survey. Financial issues were mentioned by majority of the respondents in all three age groups. According to the responses of the study participants, changes in prices and health concerns were also reported as an important reason for reducing tobacco use.

3.3.6 Expenditure on tobacco

Table 4: Monthly expenditure on tobacco for different age groups

	No. of respondents	Median (in rupees)	Interquartile Range (in rupees)	Min - Max (in rupees)
Age group (all current smokers)				
15-24	148	2515.00	5180	80-66600
25-39	363	4480.00	6450	80-60000
40 and above	147	3800.00	7060	120-46680
Age group (daily cigarette smokers)				
15-24	84	6000.00	6915	1000-66600
25-39	239	6720.00	7600	900-60000
40 and above	78	3800.00	8500	900-44800
Smoking Frequency (cigarette smokers)				
Daily	84	6720.00	8450	900-44800
Weekly	239	1650.00	2870	320-9200
Few times a month	78	400.00	5725	80-11700
Overall (Weighted)	401	6720.00	7800	900-66600

Table 5 provides detailed information on the monthly expenditure for all current smokers and daily cigarette smokers among the three age groups and expenditure based on smoking frequency.

Median value for the monthly expenditure is highest in the age group 25-39 years (Rs. 4,480.00), while it is lowest in the age group 15-24 years (Rs.2,515). However, monthly expenditure on tobacco products varies from Rs. 80.00 to Rs. 66,600.00 among all age groups. Cigarette was the most commonly used tobacco product among all consumers and daily consumption was reported by most of them. According to the collected data, all age groups spend a considerable amount of money on tobacco products. The youth spend a lesser amount on these products compared to the adult group.

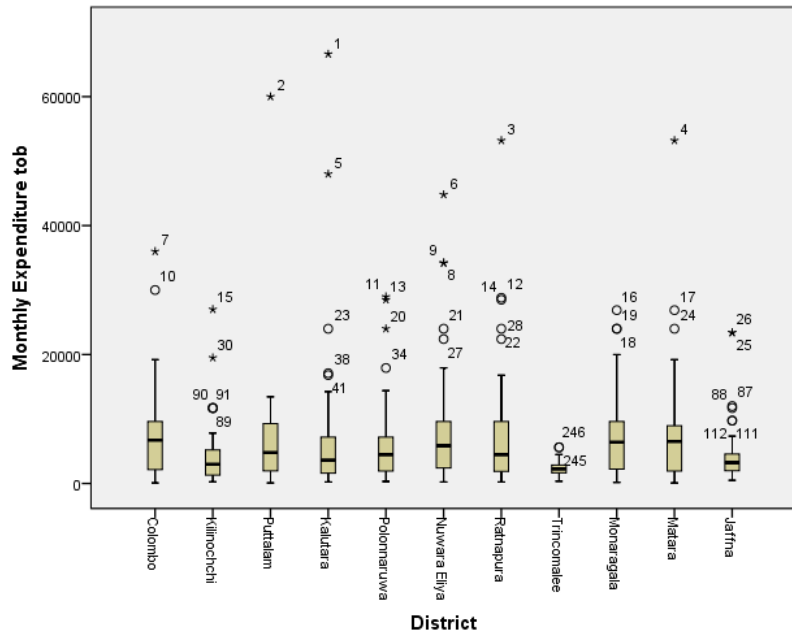


Figure 19: Monthly expenditure on tobacco for all users

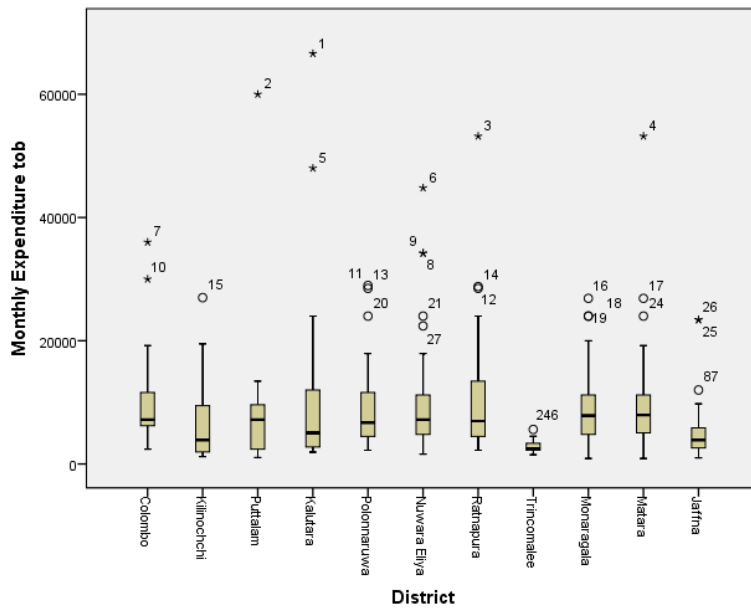


Figure 20: Monthly expenditure on cigarettes by daily users

3.3.7 Miscellaneous results

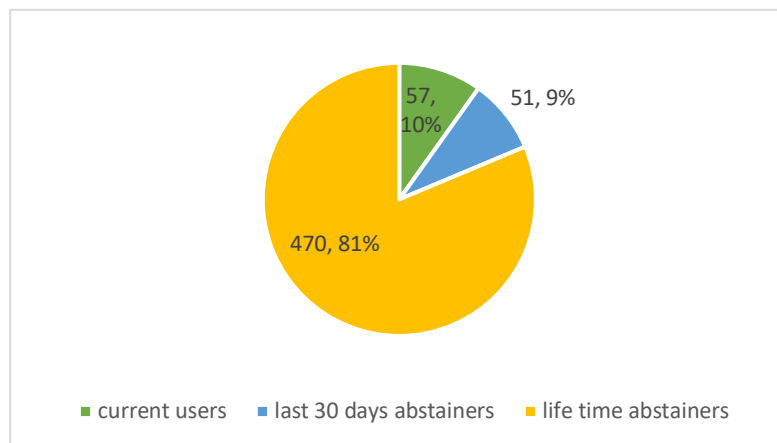


Figure 21: Status of smoking below 21 years

In Sri Lanka, the legal age for consuming tobacco products is 21 years. However, through the results obtained from the survey it was identified that there is still a percentage of 10% under the age of 21 years who are current smokers, even though the majority (81%) of this age group are lifetime abstainers.

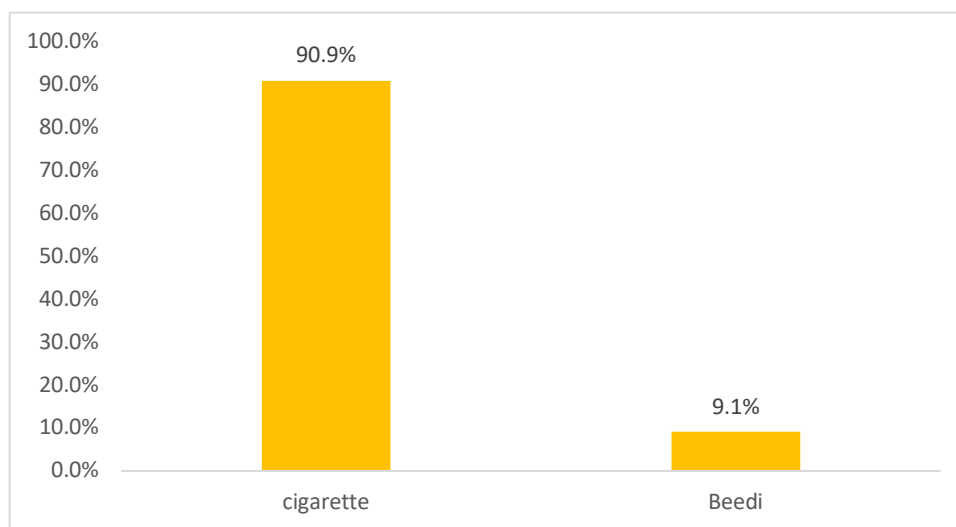


Figure 22: Type of tobacco products used by consumers below 21 years

Same as in the other categories, the most popular tobacco product among the smokers who are below 21 years, is cigarettes. A very high percentage of this population (90.9%) use cigarettes while only 9.1% use beedi.

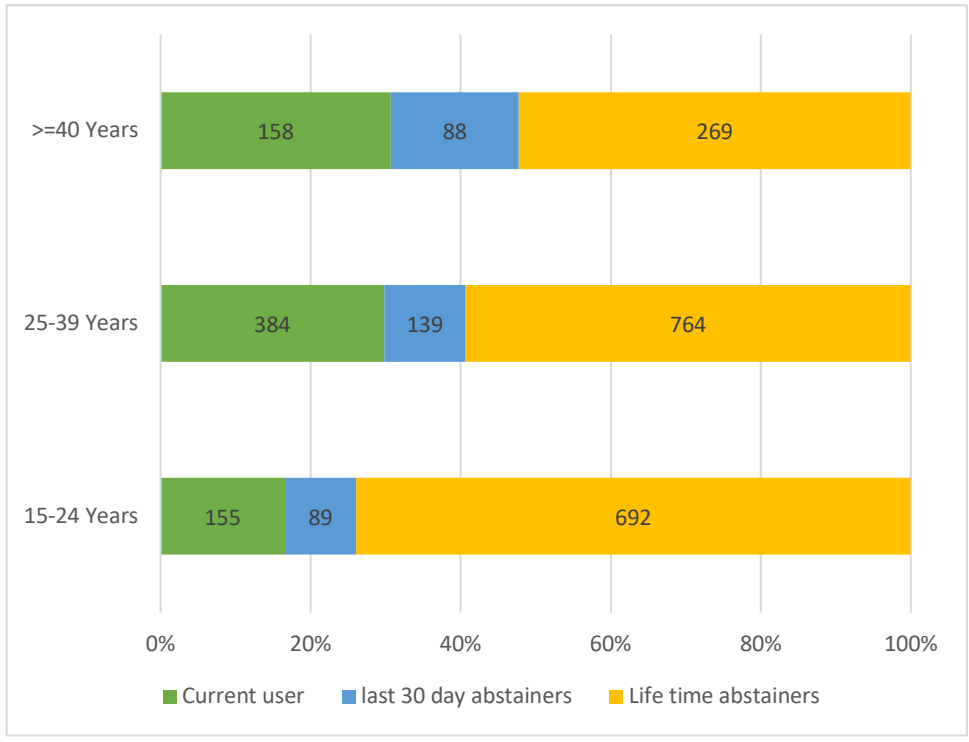


Figure 23: Usage of tobacco products within the three age groups

In all three age categories, lifetime abstainers were prominent. From the three age groups, the highest percentage of lifetime abstainers was present in the age group 15-24 years (73.9%). Current users were highest in the age group 40 ears and above (30.7%).

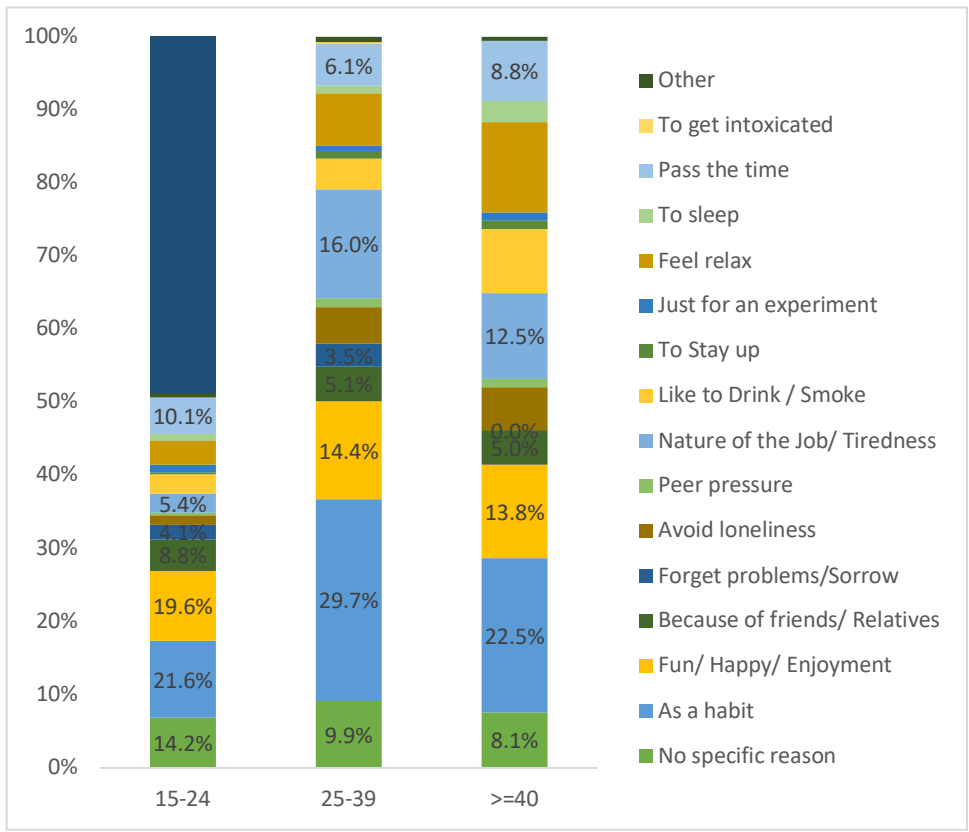


Figure 24: Reasons for smoking given by current smokers among the three age groups

The graph shows that the majority in all three age groups have stated that they consume tobacco as a habit. A considerable percentage also consume tobacco just for fun. The reasons given by the respondents seem to be different from one another, making them controversial.

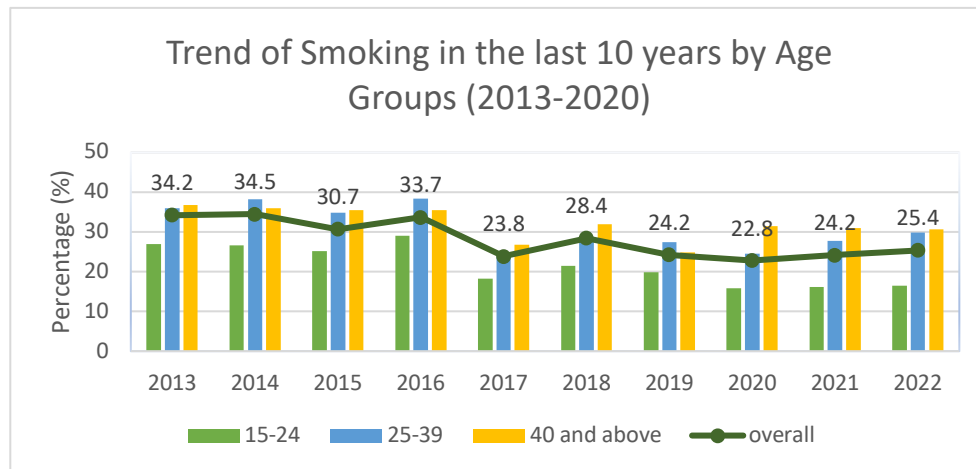


Figure 25: Trend of tobacco consumption within the last 10 years

An overall decreasing trend in tobacco use can be observed during the last ten years.

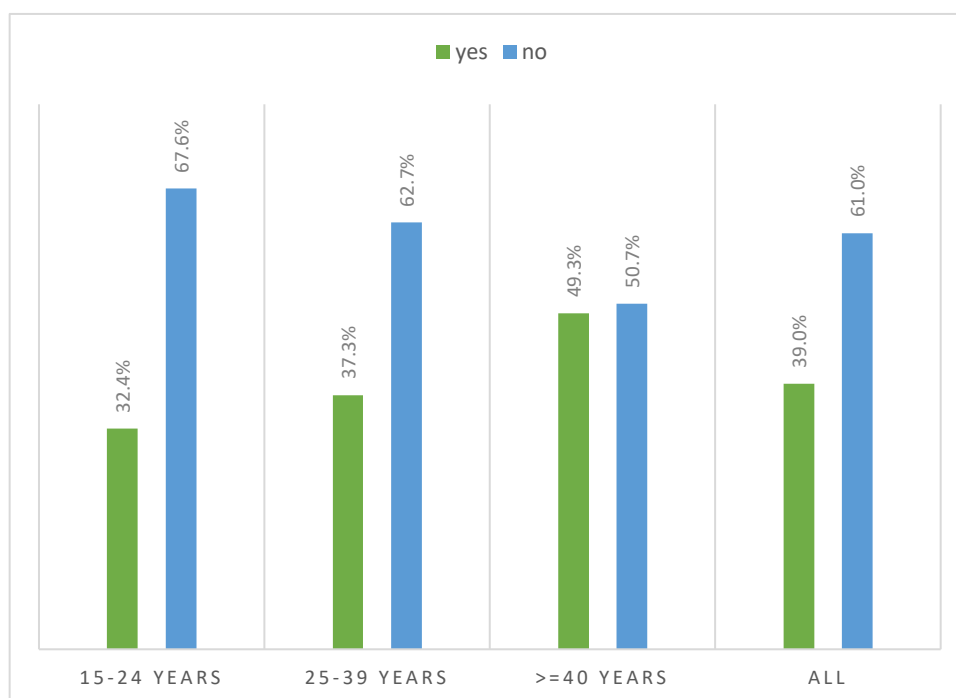


Figure 26: Smoking in the presence of others

This survey has inquired from the current smokers whether they have engaged in smoking in the presence of others, in order to understand the gravity of harm caused due to passive smoking. According to the obtained data, in all three age groups, the majority do not smoke in the presence of others.

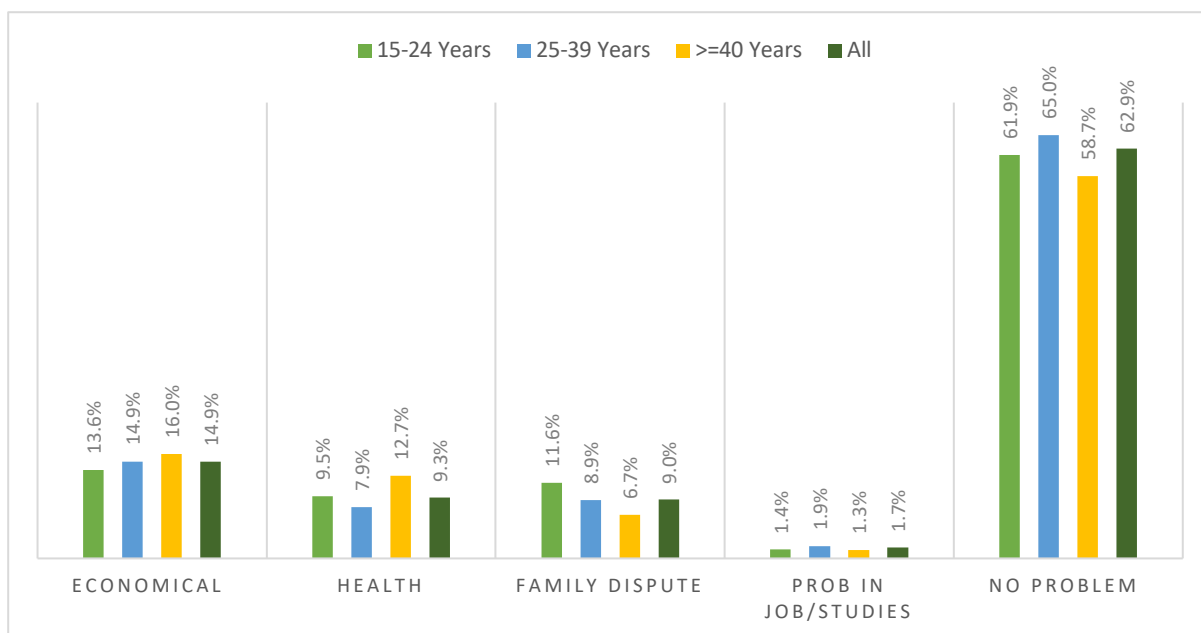


Figure 27: Problems faced by tobacco users

Economic issues, health issues and family dispute have been stated as significant issues faced by the tobacco users due to their tobacco consumption. The majority of the users have stated that they do not face any issues due to tobacco use. This might be an indication of the low level of knowledge regarding the harm of tobacco use among the majority of the users.

4. Discussion

Long-term use of tobacco has been identified as a cause of several health issues such as non-communicable diseases (NCDs), imposing a large burden on the country's economy. ADIC has been conducting trend surveys on tobacco consumption within Sri Lanka for many years, to identify the status of tobacco use within the country, and to use the data obtained through the surveys for effective implementation of tobacco control policies and community interventions for tobacco prevention. The year 2022 had been a challenging year due to the severe economic and political crisis faced by the country at the beginning of 2022, which led to drastic changes in the country's economic situation. Amidst various difficulties which occurred due to issues such as fuel shortages and substantial increases in all costs, the trend survey was successfully conducted, revealing several important facts on tobacco consumption trends within the country. The present tobacco trend survey provides a detailed overview of tobacco consumption patterns in 2022 and the change in consumption compared to previous years.

For the study, only the male population in the selected districts was included as tobacco use among females in Sri Lanka is not very common yet. When obtaining survey responses, the age, education level and occupation of the respondents were also taken into consideration. Most of the respondents were lifetime abstainers, which indicates that more people are currently aware of the negative impact and health conditions related to tobacco consumption. Self-employed respondents and individuals from the cooperate sector reported the highest usage of tobacco products, which must be due to the ability to afford these products. In the meantime, the unemployed group have reported the lowest consumption rate. The unemployed group consisted of students, retired individuals and people who do not work at all. Therefore, financial barriers must have been the main reason for the low tobacco use among the unemployed group.

When considering the districts included in the survey, Nuwara Eliya district reported the highest usage. Nuwara Eliya is a district which represents the estate community of the country and tobacco usage among these communities is comparatively high, mainly due to lack of knowledge about the harm caused by tobacco. Cigarettes and beedi are the most frequently used tobacco products in Sri Lanka. Therefore, the other products were not specified in the survey as the usage of such products is negligible compared to these two main products.

Regardless of the type of product, age of the respondents or the occupation, daily tobacco use is the most prominent. This denotes that the users are showing an addictive nature to the products, while spending a large sum of money on these products daily. This has been proven from the answers obtained for the questions regarding monthly expenditure on tobacco products from the study participants (an amount of Rs. 80 – Rs. 66,600 is spent monthly on tobacco products). According to the study, people who use tobacco products daily are mostly in the age group 40 years and above. From the different types of tobacco products, cigarettes are the most popular type among all age groups and all occupational sectors.

Even at initiation of tobacco use, cigarette was reported to be the most prominently used product. And most of the study participants had initiated tobacco use between the ages 18-20 years, either with friends or at social gatherings (e.g.: parties). These results are mostly consistent with the previous findings. The lack of knowledge on how tobacco is perceived as being pleasurable is one of the key determinants that drive this behaviour. Therefore, policy formulations are extremely important within the country to stop or delay initiations as much as possible.

When considering the responses obtained from lifetime smokers regarding cessation of tobacco use, the majority (90%) has been unable to quit the habit, while only a small percentage (10%) has completely

stopped smoking. The reasons for quitting were mostly financial issues and change in prices, while several other reasons were given by other respondents. This implies that the price increase of tobacco products during the economic crisis has been effective in reducing tobacco usage among individuals. When asked about the issues faced by tobacco users, the majority has implied that they do not face any problems related to tobacco use. This shows that the majority of tobacco users are unaware about the harm of tobacco use. Therefore, there is a strong need for implementation of more tobacco control programmes among vulnerable groups to spread awareness about the negative impact of tobacco use.

National Authority on Tobacco and Alcohol Act No. 27 enacted in 2006 imposes the legal boundaries on selling tobacco and it is prohibited to sell tobacco products for individuals under the age of 21 years. However, the study reveals that still, a percentage of 10% under the age of 21 years is current smokers, which is slightly lower than the percentage in last year (11%). This is a clear indication of the fact that NATA Act which prohibits tobacco sales for underage individuals has been violated.

From the study findings it is clear that, a national action plan is required including all strategies for tobacco control, which covers all policies that have been already formulated. Tobacco taxation and introducing indexation to adjust the tax to inflation is essential to prevent tobacco use and related issues within the country. However, the overall trend of tobacco use within the last decade indicates a decline in the consumption of tobacco. The tobacco control measures, and the community interventions established by interested parties have been largely effective in reducing the overall tobacco use within the country.

At a period where the country is at a difficult economic juncture, increasing tobacco tax can be a highly effective strategy to bring a large revenue to the government. Furthermore, increasing tobacco tax will directly contribute to increase in tobacco prices, which will lead to reduced usage and related consequences in the long run. Therefore, the attention of the responsible parties such as media and Members of the Parliament should be focused on implementing effective tobacco control strategies as a way of addressing the tobacco harm and as a solution to the prevailing economic crisis in the country. The study findings will provide guidance to all interested organizations and individuals to choose appropriate approaches to enforce evidence-based tobacco control policies and develop prevention interventions targeting user specific consumption patterns in the country.

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