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### **Analysis of railway accessibility in Sri Lanka**

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The railway system in Sri Lanka was entirely developed during the colonial period starting from 1850 to 1928. Since independence only a handful of track kilometres have been added to the network. This railway network has been developed to serve the country's economy at during that period. Though the overall modal split (both passenger and freight) has deteriorated with time, this network still serves the economy to some extent. This paper analyses the present level of access to the railway and to examine if the railway has contributed to the social/ economical development of the areas served. As railway can be accessed only at stations, the distribution of stations plays a vital role in providing accessibility. The objective of this paper is to assess the accessibility levels of the railway in different parts of the country and to study any correlation between socio economic development and railway access. This study mainly focuses on the distribution of railway stations at Province, District and Divisional Secretariat Division (DSD) levels. Analysis has been carried out to compare the number of railway stations along with the population and the land area of each DS Division, District and Province. Few parameters; number of stations per 1000 km<sup>2</sup> land area and number of stations per 10,000 population, has been proposed for assessing accessibility to the railway. Correlation between these parameters and social and economic indicators were also investigated.

This study uses the secondary data obtained from the Department of Railways, Central Bank Reports and the Department of Census and Statistics in Sri Lanka. It is found that of the 311 railway stations and stops that are in operation at present, 4 % are within the Colombo DS division. The number of DS Divisions which are not served by the railway is 221, which is 71% of the total number of DS Divisions. A comparison at the district level revealed that railway accessibility (station density) has is positively correlated to the average household income and the level of education in the District and is negatively correlated to the poverty headcount

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