The National Socio-Economic Survey (NSES) 2001 collected data on the perceived dental illness, disturbance and its duration in dental treatment by health services, and in modern and traditional self-medication. The NSES data was analyzed to study the community perception towards dental illness and motivation for dental care. The prevalence of dental illness was 1.2 per 100 respondents in the last one-month period prior to the survey, showing no significant difference when compared to NSES 1998 or 1.3 per 100 respondents. The perceived dental illness was most prevalent among the 35-39 years old subjects, at 1.8 per 100 respondents. Among those with dental illness, 67 percent of the cases had disturbed daily activity with an average duration of 4 days. Among those with dental illness, 69 percent of the cases ever had modern or traditional self-medication to overcome the symptoms. However, 36 percent of those with dental illness had further treatment by the health services, showing an increased coverage of health service treatments in 2001 compared to 1998 (13 percent of dental cases). Among these only 67 percent of the treatments were performed by dentists.