

UDAYA

Understanding the lives of adolescents and young adults

The UDAYA study carried out a survey with adolescents (10 to 19 years old) in the states of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, India to record their transition into young adulthood. More than 20,000 adolescents were interviewed in 2015-16 (Wave 1) and followed up in 2018-19 (Wave 2).

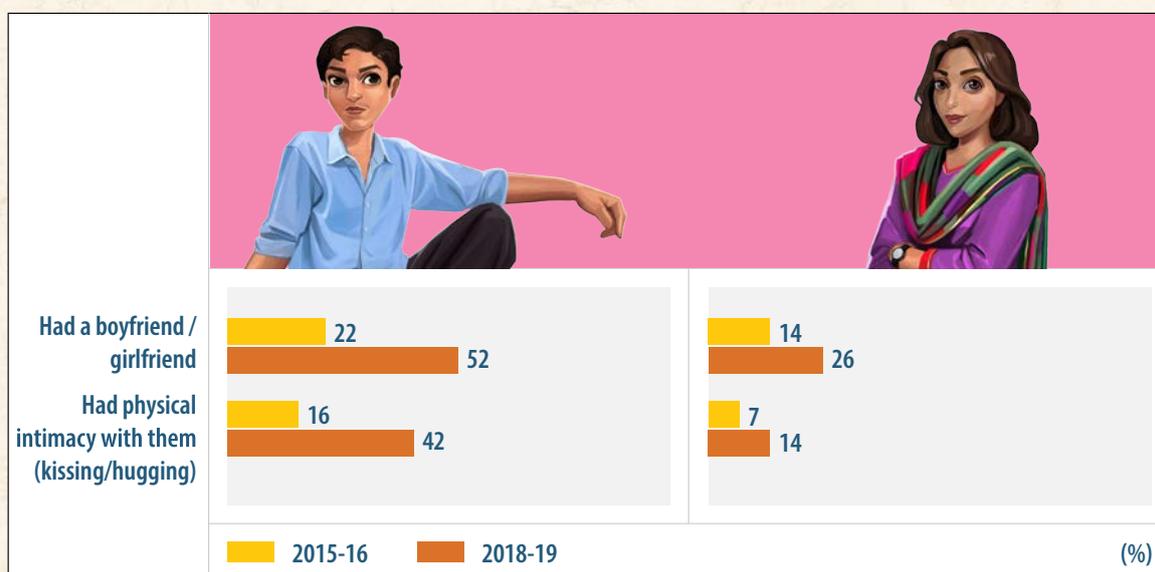
The significance of romantic relationships for adolescent wellbeing



Positive interpersonal relationships are a cornerstone for wellbeing during childhood and adolescence. As young people grow into puberty, they also begin to explore romantic relationships, which are based on feelings of affection and attraction, and often involve a sexual component. The quality of these relationships can have varying effects on their wellbeing in the long run. The longitudinal UDAYA study in India sought to explore the prevalence and significance of romantic relationships and its association with the wellbeing of adolescents.

What is their relationship status?

Percentage of adolescents reporting romantic relationships

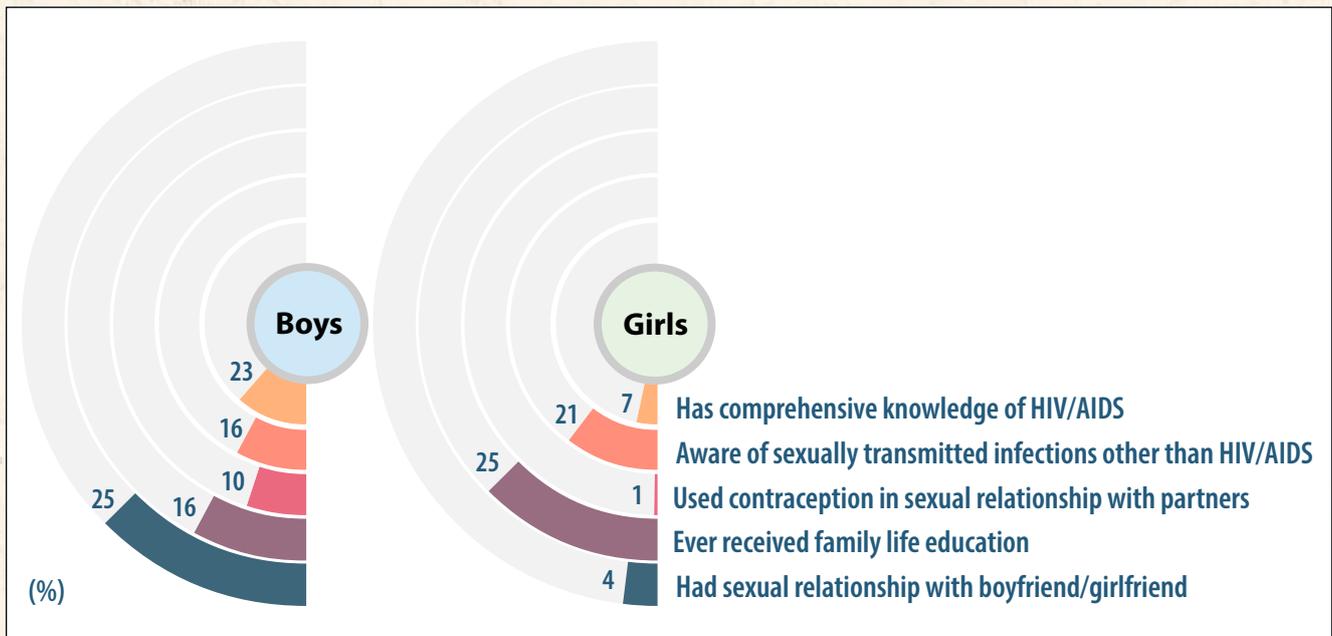


15-19 years old in 2015-16 and remained unmarried till 2018-19

The study results showed that a sizeable share of adolescent boys and girls had been involved in romantic relationships, and this proportion doubled as they grew into young adults. Twice as many adolescent boys than girls reported having a romantic relationship. This also holds true for adolescents' experience of

physical intimacy or sexual experiences. The number of boys and girls who reported engaging in acts of physical intimacy such as hugging and kissing, or in sexual encounters, increased with age. Notably, the proportion of adolescent boys outweighed the girls by many times

Sexual health practices and levels of awareness of adolescents (2018-19)



Unmarried and 18-22 years old in 2018-19

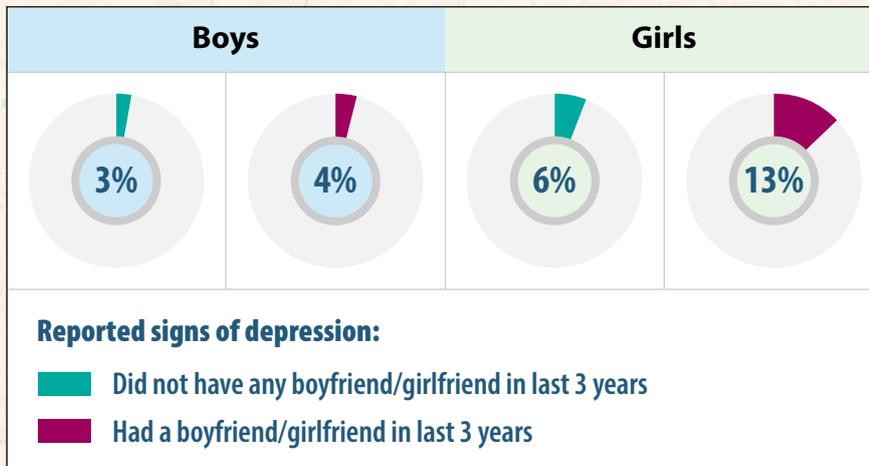
Though romantic relationships are seen to be common, they often involve engaging in risky sexual health experiences. The knowledge of sexually transmitted infections is low, and a large proportion of adolescents and young adults who

reported sexual relations with a romantic partner had engaged in unprotected sex. Awareness about HIV is lower among girls as compared to boys, and comprehensive knowledge on HIV transmission and prevention even lower.



How do adolescents negotiate such relationships?

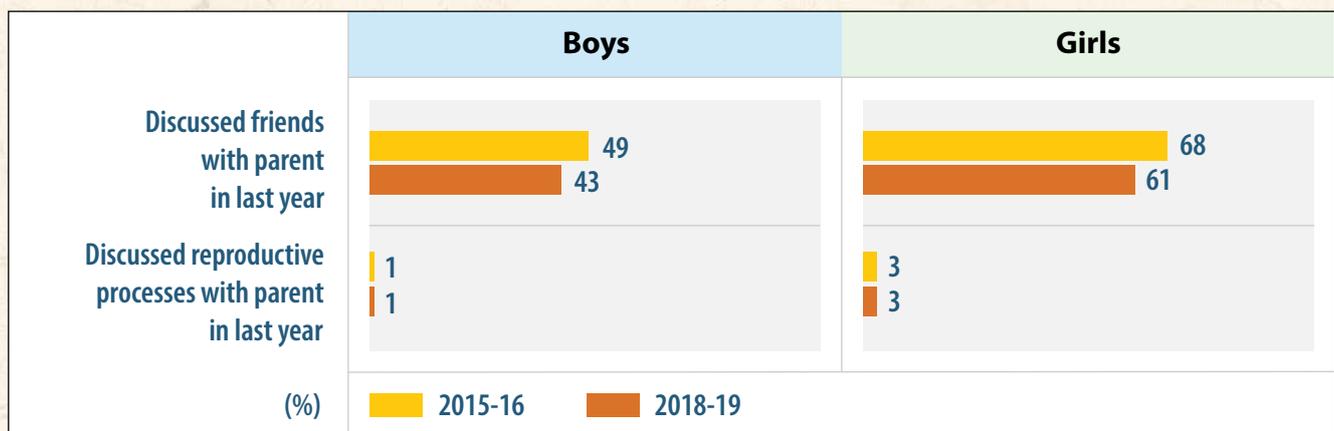
Adolescents who reported symptoms of depression by status of romantic relationship (2018-19)



UDAYA data from 2018-19 shows that the reporting of mental depression was double among 18-22-year-old girls who had a boyfriend as against those who did not. No such association was found for boys of the same age group with girlfriends.

Unmarried and 18-22 years old in 2018-19

Level of parental engagement in romantic relationships

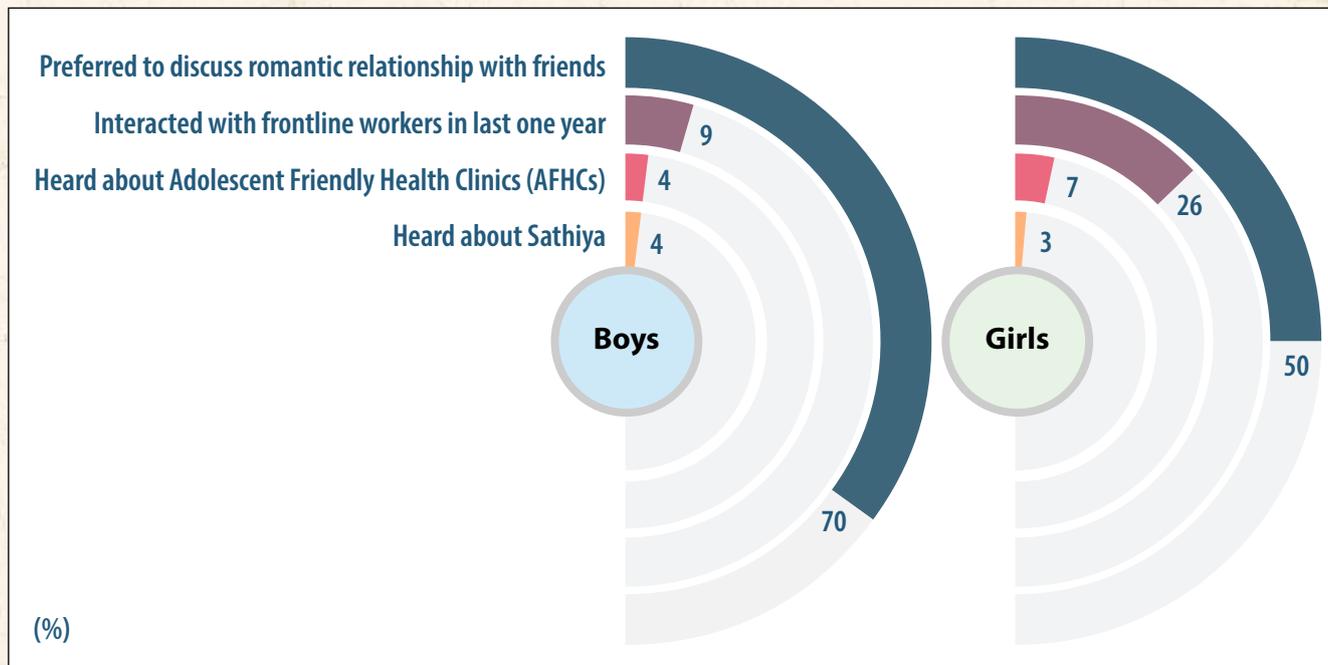


Unmarried adolescents 15-19 years old in 2015-16 with either parent alive

A challenge that adolescents in romantic relationships are seen to encounter is the limited avenues for help-seeking. While adolescents, especially girls, are comfortable discussing their friends with parents, they do not consult parents on romantic relationships, and are often left to rely on friends for information or

emotional support. In fact, 60-70% of the boys and almost half the girls in the study said that they relied on peers for guidance in times of doubt or conflict with their partner. However, information received from peers might also be incomplete or unreliable, thereby affecting their emotional wellbeing.

Sources of information and services for adolescents (2018-19)



Unmarried and 18-22 years old in 2018-19

What can be done to improve the emotional wellbeing of adolescents?

UDAYA data shows that the interaction of adolescents with people who can support emotional wellbeing (e.g., frontline health workers, parents, trained counsellors) is limited. Peer educators (Sathiya) and Adolescent Friendly Health Clinics (AFHCs) established for peer support and counselling under the government's Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram Karyakram (RKSK) are yet to make significant contributions to

adolescent wellbeing. In order to ensure that romantic relationships have a positive effect on adolescents, and to avoid any mental or physical harm, there is a need to ensure safe spaces where they may share their problems and seek guidance without fear of taboo. These could be by intensifying the existing programme initiatives or through innovative digital solutions.

Contributors

Neelanjana Pandey, Sangram Kishor Patel, Sanjay Patnaik, Tanushree Sengupta, Nidhi Khurana

Photo credit

Top – Photo by Bhuvanesh Gupta on Unsplash

Middle left – Photo by Faiz Husain on Unsplash; Middle right – UDAYA Project

About Udaya Study

The UDAYA (Understanding the lives of adolescents and young adults) study establishes the levels, patterns and trends in the situation of younger (10-14) and older (15-19) adolescents in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. Its findings provide insights on how and where to make investments to improve their lives by the time they reach young adulthood and beyond. The study recruited more than 20,000 adolescents aged 10–19 years in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar in 2015–16 (Wave 1) to record their transition from adolescence to young adulthood.

Wave 1 was followed by another survey round in 2018-19 (Wave 2) with the same respondents and achieved an 80% follow-up rate. This makes UDAYA the largest adolescent-centric longitudinal study in India and globally, carried out by the Population Council. The recruitment of adolescents for the study coincided with the adoption of the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015, providing an opportunity to track their progress over time.



Supported by

BILL & MELINDA
GATES *foundation*

the David &
Lucile Packard
FOUNDATION



UDAYA builds evidence