

New Vision

Uganda: Over 70 Percent Teens Engage in Risky Sex

<p>Francis Kagolo</p>

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Almost three quarters of Ugandan teenagers aged between 15 and 19 years are engaging in higher risk sex with minimal condom use, the new HIV/AIDS report has revealed.

This means that about 2.6 million (71%) of the 3.6 million teenagers in this age bracket have risky sex. However, less than half of them use condoms.

The revelation is contained in the Uganda AIDS Indicator Survey (UAIS) 2011 report, which was launched this week by the Ministry of Health.

The report defines higher risk sex as sex with a non-marital or non-cohabiting partner.

The survey was conducted by the Ministry of Health and the Uganda Bureau of Statistics with support of several American and European development organisations as well as the World Health Organisation (WHO).

In the survey, a representative sample of 12,153 female and 9,588 male, aged between 15 and 59 years, in selected households were interviewed across the country. Of this number, 2,089 were in the 15-19 age bracket.

The prevalence of higher risk sex is greater among teenagers and singles than the married and divorced. Risky sexual behaviour is also more common in teenage boys than girls.

Some 92.6% of boys aged between 15 and 19 engage in higher risk sex, yet only 31.5% reported using condoms during their last sexual intercourse.

On the other hand, 49.2% of teenage girls engage in higher risk sex with only 33.8% using condoms.

The report also reveals increasing cross-generational sex, which is more prevalent among uneducated girls and decreases as the educational level increases.

In youth (20-24 years), the report says premarital sex is more common in urban areas and among those with higher levels of education.

Medics and anti-HIV activists yesterday attributed the poignant situation in teenagers to parental negligence as well as widespread pornography.

Molly Businge, who heads Kawaala Health Centre III in Rubaga division, revealed that between six to seven out of 10 adolescents who visit the clinic have sexually transmitted diseases.

"Children, even those in rural areas, almost have unlimited access to video halls where they watch pornographic movies. After watching the movies, they always want to try out what they have seen," explained Regina Ssali-Mugabi, the nurse in charge of the HIV clinic at Kisugu Health Centre III in Makindye.

Mugabi also blamed wealthy parents for availing teenagers with huge sums of pocket money, which they eventually use to seduce girls into sex.

In the survey, about two-thirds of adults (18-49) supported the idea of teaching children aged between 12 and 14 years about using a condom to avoid HIV.

"Over 94% of women and men agree that children should be taught to wait until marriage to have sex," says the report.

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