

# Adolescents' Digital Interaction and Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in India, November 2022

*Study conducted in four states – Bihar, Delhi, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh*

Population Foundation of India conducted a mixed-method study in four states- Bihar, Delhi, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh to understand the type and amount of social media activity among adolescents and analyse adolescents' awareness and experiences of Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (OCSEA). The study also focused on understanding and analysing the parents' and teachers' perceptions of adolescent digital engagement.



## Methodology:



**Adolescents = 822**



**Parents= 219**

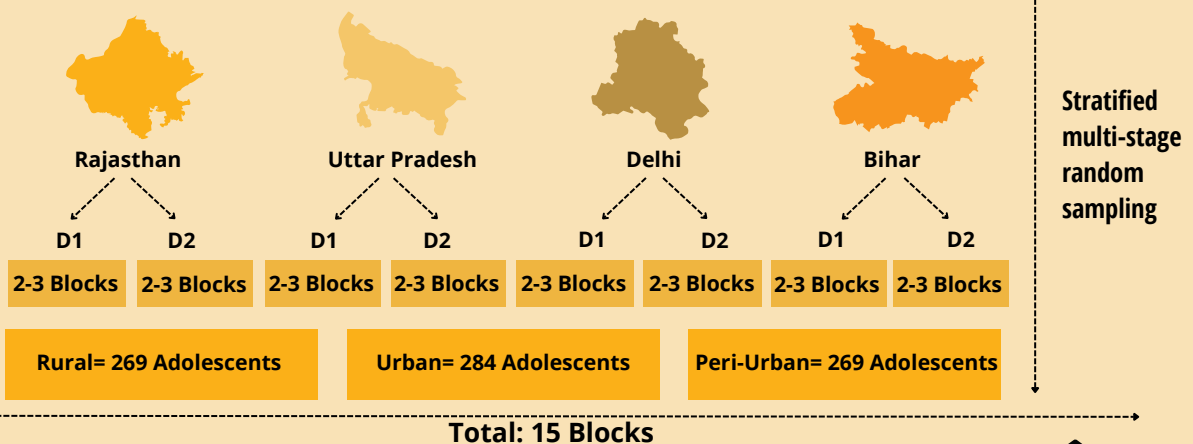


**Teachers= 45**

An extensive literature review was triangulated with results from a quantitative survey with 822 adolescent girls and boys, 219 parents, and 45 teachers across the four states. The respondents for the quantitative survey were chosen across rural, urban, and peri-urban regions, with a sample size powered at 80% and a confidence interval of 95% at region level.



## Sampling Method:






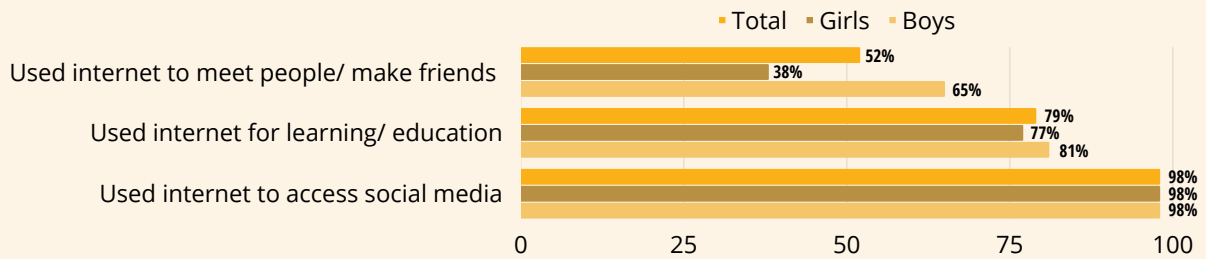
Households were screened to identify the respondents, and only households with adolescents (between the ages of 13-19) were surveyed.



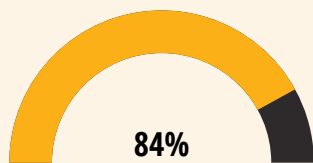
40 in-depth interviews were also done with adolescents, parents, teachers, civil society organizations, and technology/ social media companies.

## Digital Access and Internet Use Among Adolescents

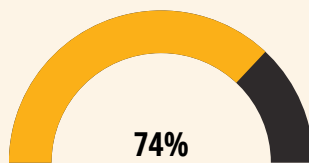
Area of Inquiry	Boys (N=418)	Girls (N=404)	Rural (N=269)	Urban (N=284)	Total (N=822)
 Owned a phone	64%	37%	45%	55%	51%
 Had access to phone	98%	99%	99%	98%	98%
 Had access to internet	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%



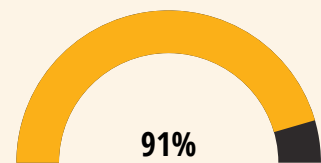
## Parental Supervision



**84%** parents aware that adolescent wards used the internet for education & to access social media.

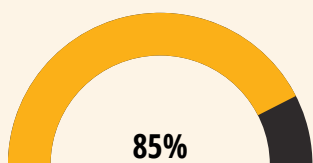


**74%** reported monitoring their ward's internet use.

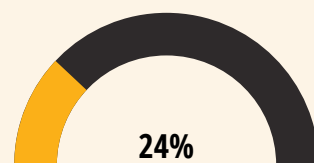


**91%** parents were unaware that adolescents used the internet to meet new people, visit chat rooms, and for instant messaging.

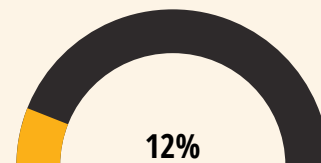
## Common methods of parental supervision/ monitoring of internet use (reported by adolescents)



**85%** believed in checking device to supervise internet activity



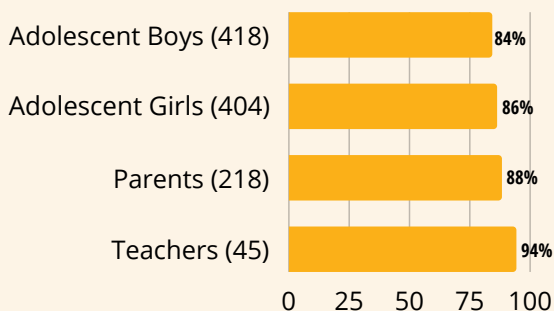
**24%** believed in limiting hours of use



**12%** believed in limiting purpose of use

## Internet Risk Perception

### Believe that internet poses a threat to the privacy and security of young persons



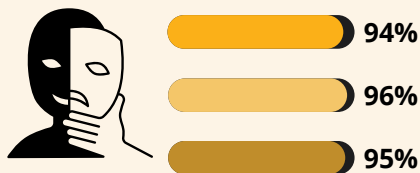
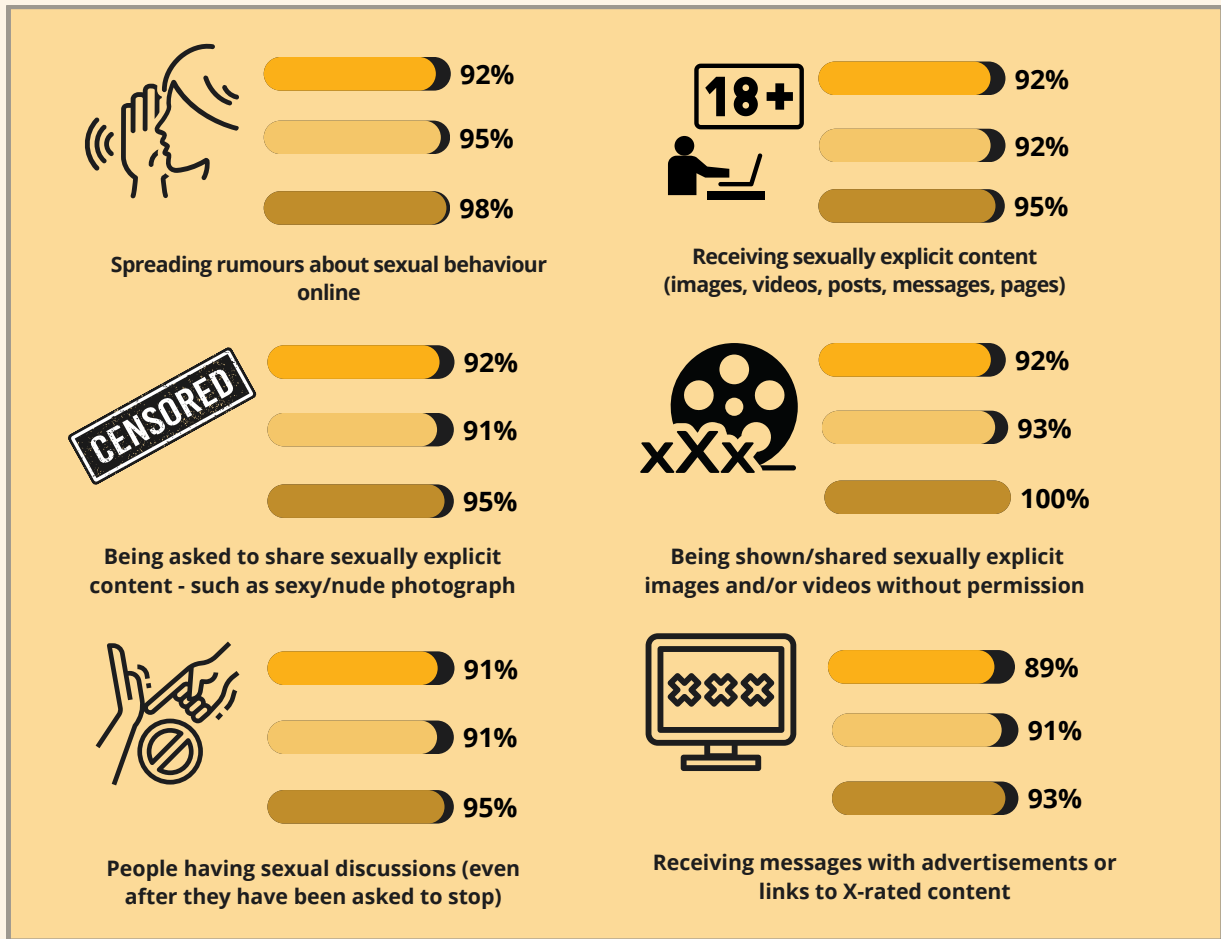
"Single girls can get penalised if they are caught watching sexual content. For boys, on the other hand, it is seen as acceptable. Most likely, they might be scolded"

- Adolescent Boy, UP



# Understanding of OCSEA

What constitutes OCSEA? (as reported by adolescents, parents and teachers)



Financial fraud or cheating someone financially



People posting rude things about views/posts online



People making jokes online











Visiting/viewing a pornographic website or content

■ Adolescents N= 684    ■ Parents N= 163    ■ Teachers N= 42

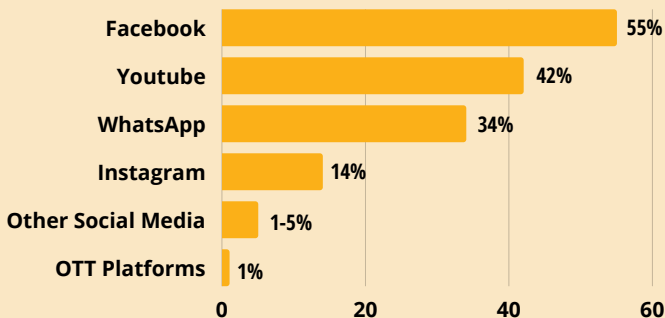
It appears that majority of adolescents understood what OCSEA constitutes. However, they also considered other aspects – such as financial fraud, making jokes and posting rude views online as OCSEA. There is hence a need for clear information to be imparted to adolescents on what OCSEA is, and how it can be perpetrated.

Given the definition of OCSEA for this study - “unwanted sexual conduct on any digital platform. It includes a wide range of behaviours that use technology to share digital content such as images, videos, posts, messages, pages, etc.”, all options put within the box could be considered OCSEA.

## Experiences of OCSEA

Incidents of OCSEA Faced by Adolescents	Total (N=822)	Boys (N=418)	Girls (N=404)	Rural (N=269)	Urban (N=284)
 When online, found oneself on a website/link that showed sexually explicit content	12%	15%	10%	9%	14%
 Received email or message with ads/links to explicit/X-rated content or websites	8%	9%	6%	7%	7%
 Received sexually explicit content from a known or unknown person	3%	4%	3%	3%	3%
 When online, someone spoke about sex even when did not want to talk about it.	0.36%	0.24%	1%	0.37%	1%
 Asked for sexual information about self	1%	2%	0.25%	1%	1%
 Asked to do an activity that was sexually explicit	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
 Threatened or embarrassed by someone posting or sending messages to others	1%	0.72%	1.24%	1%	1%
 Faced at least one OCSEA incident (of the seven above)	15%	12%	12%	16%	17%

Online Platforms Where OCSEA Incidents Were Faced by Adolescents



More adolescent girls reported instances of persons talking to them about sex despite their reluctance, or being threatened or embarrassed by someone posting or sending messages about them to other persons.

"I suddenly got messages and voice notes from someone saying that he loved me on WhatsApp, from multiple numbers. I also got two video calls from two of the numbers. I spoke to my uncle and blocked the numbers"

-Adolescent Girl, Rajasthan



"I take my phone to watch education related videos, but within an hour, I start to feel like watching some song videos or serials. Some inappropriate videos also come up during that time, so I watch them. Sometimes, it has also happened on Facebook, but I ignore it on FB"

-Adolescent Girl, Bihar



"My friend is in a WhatsApp group, where sexual content of all kind is regularly shared"

- Adolescent Boy, Bihar



## Reporting and Redressal Mechanisms

### Awareness of helplines/ reporting mechanisms for reporting sexual abuse among children and adolescents

Respondents aware of online platforms or helplines where sexual abuse among children and adolescents could be reported.

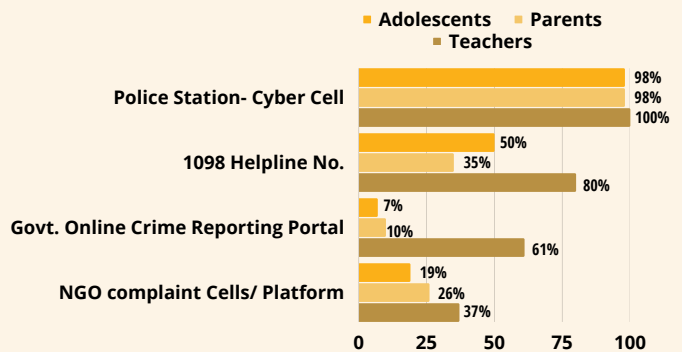


### Awareness of different helplines/ reporting mechanisms (Among those aware about helplines and reporting mechanisms for OCSEA)

Adolescents  
(N=538)

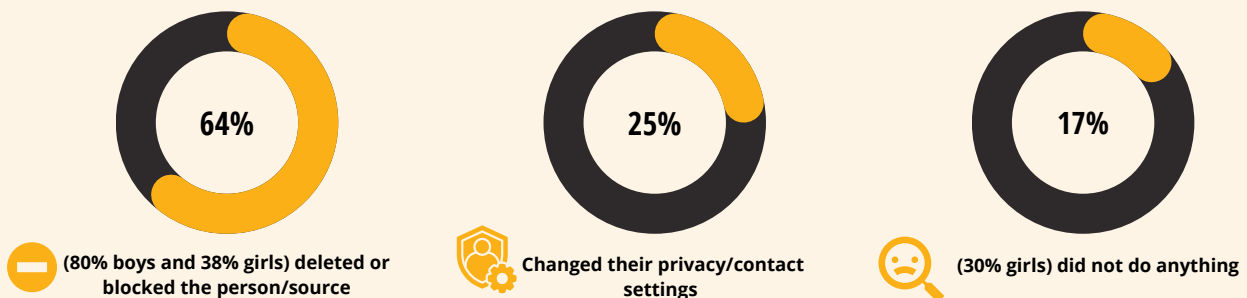
Parents  
(N=145)

Teachers  
(N=41)



## Reporting Incidents of OCSEA

### Action taken to address incidents related to OCSEA



Adolescents feared reporting or telling their parents of OCSEA, more so girls, who feared significant punitive action, including discontinuation of education and early marriage.

## Recommendations and Actions Points

Need for a multi-stakeholder efforts to ensure a safer internet ecosystem for children and adolescents.



#### Overarching policy and system recommendations:

- Need for clear & common definition of OCSEA, with common interpretation and redressal across laws and policies.
- Robust information systems - gathering/ collating information on OCSEA
- Clear processes and systems to address OCSEA
- Strengthen existing redressal systems, including police and helplines, to ensure easy access
- Wider public awareness of available helplines and systems
- Effective engagement with the private sector and technology companies to identify and report incidents of OCSEA.



**Public awareness and digital literacy to reach all citizens:** Development of age-appropriate curriculum, embedded in schools and circulated through online and offline modes.



**Comprehensive sexuality education:** Enable an environment where issues of sexual health and abuse are discussed and addressed constructively.



**Empowering key stakeholders:** Building capacities of parents, teachers, and law enforcement/system, to provide information, and support adolescents to identify and manage OCSEA with sensitivity.



Population Foundation of India is a national non-government organisation (NGO), founded in 1970 by JRD Tata, that promotes and advocates for the effective formulation and implementation of gender-sensitive population, health and development strategies and policies. Working with government and NGOs, it addresses population issues within the large discourse of empowering women and men.

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**End Violence  
Against Children**

The End Violence Partnership is a platform for collective, evidence-based advocacy and action launched in July 2016 by the UN Secretary-General with a focus on fulfilling the Sustainable Development Goal 16.2: ending all forms of violence against children by 2030.