

# IS KNOWLEDGE POWER? HIV-STATUS DISCLOSURE AND PROTECTIVE SEXUAL PRACTICES AMONG ADOLESCENTS IN SOUTH AFRICA



Elona Toska, Rebecca Hodes, Lucie Cluver,  
*and the Mzantsi Wakho study team*

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## DISCLOSURE AND SAFE SEX AMONG HIV-POSITIVE ADOLESCENTS IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

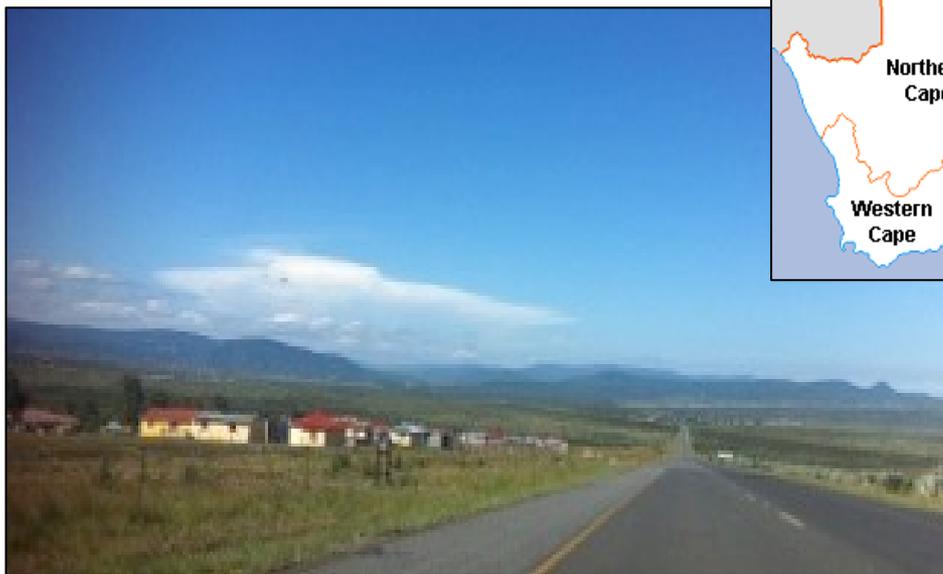
- High rates of unprotected sex and unwanted pregnancies among HIV+ adolescents.
- **Knowing own HIV+ status** in adolescents linked to **more safe sex** in one study in Uganda, but **less protected sex** in two other studies comparing HIV-positive to HIV-negative adolescents and youth in Uganda and Cameroon.
- **Lower rates of condom use** among HIV-positive adolescents who had **disclosed to their partners** in Uganda.
- No data on **knowledge of partner HIV status**.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

We compare HIV-positive adolescent girls who knew their status (HIV-positive status-aware N=442) to adolescent girls who did not know their status (status-unaware, whether HIV-positive or negative N=426):

1. Is knowing your HIV+ status linked with protective sexual practices?
2. Is disclosing your HIV+ status to your partner linked with protective sexual practices?
3. Is knowing your partner's HIV status (positive or negative) linked with protective sexual practices?

# RESEARCH SETTING: THE EASTERN CAPE



- Provincial HIV prevalence 11.6%
- HIV prevalence among children 2 – 14 is 1.3% and youth 15 – 24 is 6.2% (HSRC 2014)
- Prevalence among women in antenatal clinics in Buffalo City: 33.4% (DOH 2013)



# HIV+ ADOLESCENTS: IMPROVING OUTCOMES



## Longitudinal panel study (2014-2018)

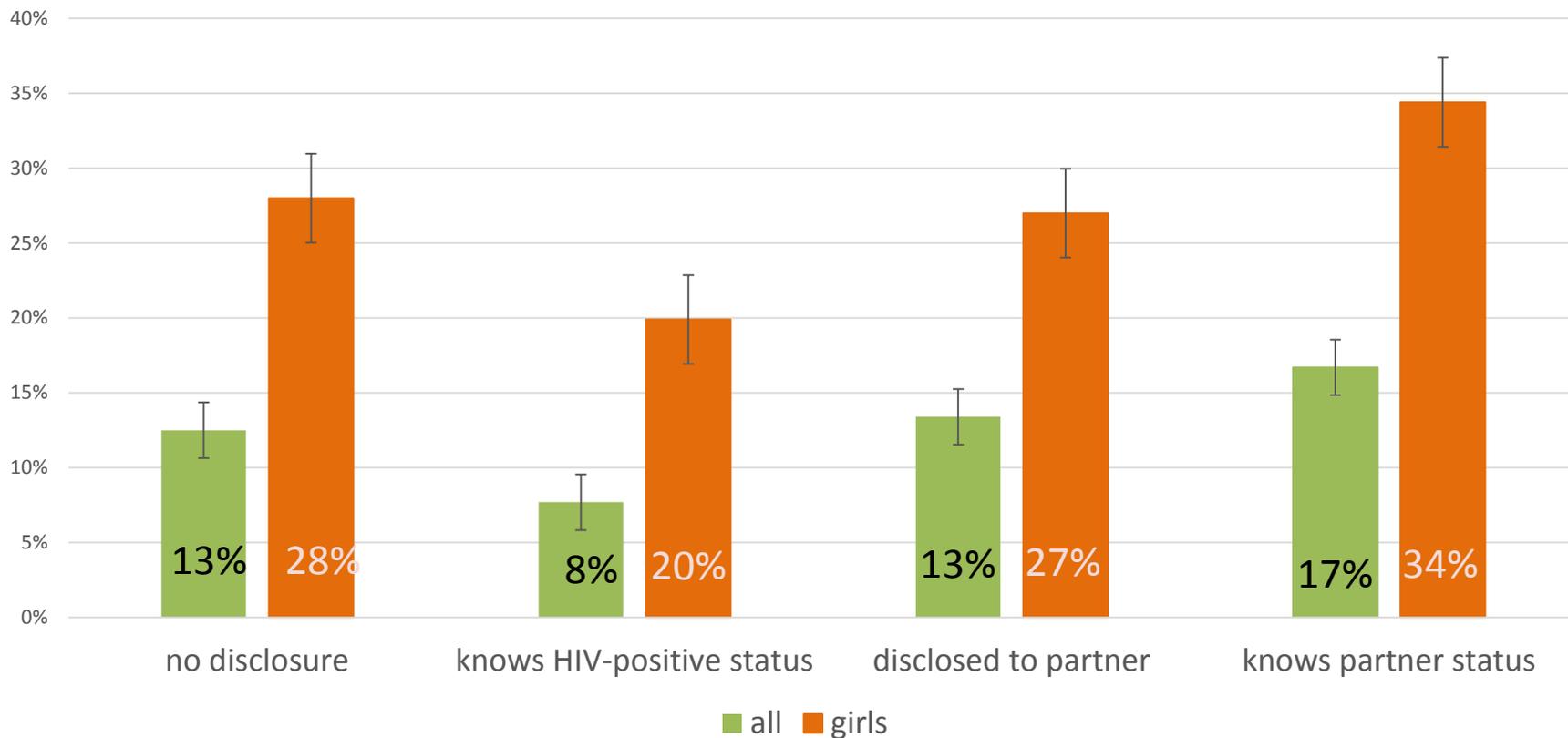
- **1060 HIV+, 467 HIV- adolescents**
- Every adolescent who ever initiated ART in an urban/rural health district of the Eastern Cape:
- 53 health facilities, 91% of all adolescents reached
- Community-tracing, 3-year longitudinal tracking
- Clinical and interview data, standardised questionnaires

## Qualitative research (2013-2018, led by R Hodes UCT)

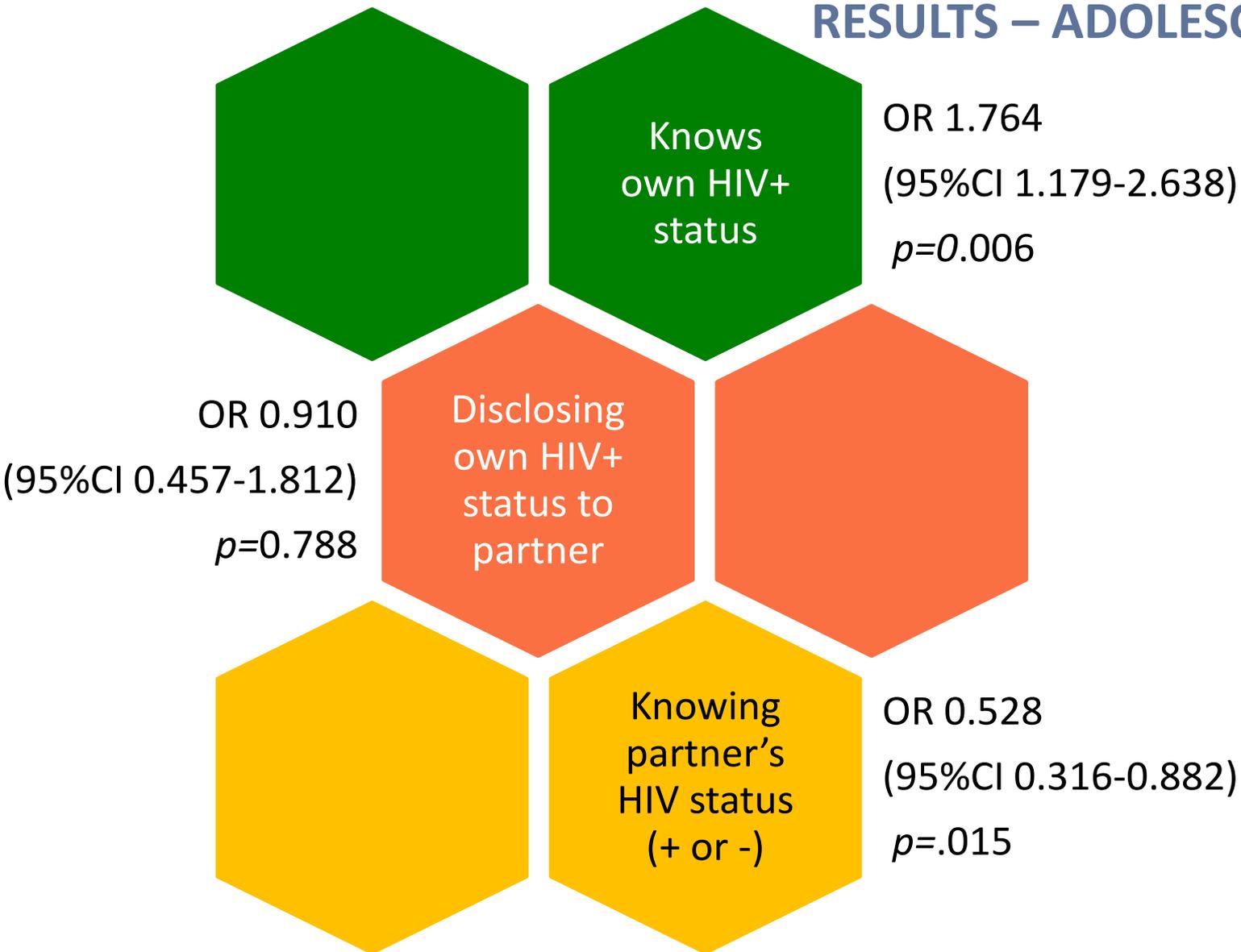
- In-depth qualitative research with **N=80 youth**
- Interviews, focus groups, home, school & clinic observations, participatory exercises, dream clinics & consultations, youth summits

# HIV-POSITIVE STATUS DISCLOSURE: NOT PROTECTIVE ENOUGH

**% Probabilities of unprotected sex at last encounter**  
(modelled marginal effects controlling for socio-demographic covariates)

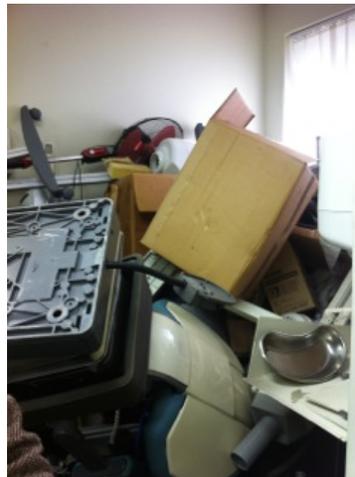
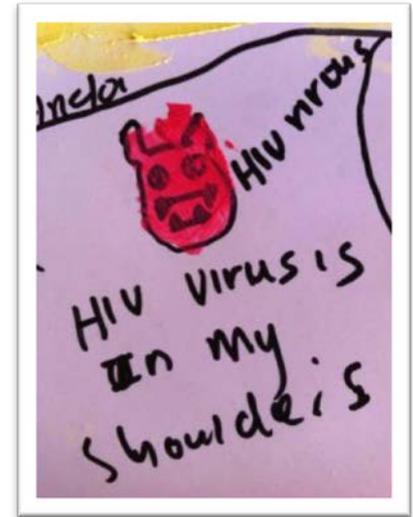


# RESULTS – ADOLESCENT GIRLS (N=868)



## KEY FINDINGS - DISCLOSURE

- This does not mean that HIV+ teens disclose to their partners, or have protected sex.
- Disclosure is often partial, tentative, implied – and NOT a priority:
  - ‘What would you do if I told you I was HIV-positive’? [Siphe, 18, Gompo clinic, 23 June 2014].



# HIV+ ADOLESCENTS, DISCLOSURE, AND UNSAFE SEX

Thandie: I will never tell him. Never... Sometimes its not really the guys to be blamed. Sometimes it's the girls too. We just want to sleep with him, because he's popular. Also, because he's got money. This person wants this man, because of what she benefits from him. You are dependent and you have to survive.

We use a condom sometimes. At times my boyfriend would complain that the condom tightens his penis. He would forget to get them before I come to visit him and when I get there he would not have condoms. And sometimes I would insist on having sex with a condom and if he does not have one, we will not have sex.

[Mandi, 17, Mdantsane]

Toska, Cluver, Hodes, Kidia (2015) *AIDS Care*. 27:sup1, 47-58.

# HIV+ ADOLESCENTS, DISCLOSURE, AND UNSAFE SEX

Int  
‘When I had the test, they counselled me, and the sister told me that I must disclose to my sexual partners. But no-one is going to do that, no one can. Maybe some can, but they are scared that their partners will blame them. Because if the boy didn’t go to test, he is going to say to you, ‘You are the one who has brought this to me’, even though he doesn’t know his status. [Siphe, 18, Gompo clinic, 23 June 2014]

pick up.

Toska, Cluver, Hodes, Kidia (2015) *AIDS Care*. 27:sup1, 47-58.

# INCREDIBLE TEAMS & TEENS

Analysis and writing: Lucie Cluver, Rebecca Hodes, Elona Toska, Lesley Gittings, Marija Pantelic, Mark Orkin, Lorraine Sherr, Mark Boyes, Franziska Meinck, Mosa Moshabela, Helen Nakatunda, Craig Carty.

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Mzantsi Wakho fieldwork: W Booii, N Bungane, L Button, C Carty, KE Chademana, L Cluver, Y Dunkley, N Galela, C Gilmer, L Gittings, N Gwebecimele, R Haighighat, E He, A Heusel, R Hodes, M Isaacsohn, Z Jantjies, R Jopling, C Kama, B Kamile, B Kinana, V Luke, B Madondo, K Makabane, B Makwenkwe, T Mampangashe, Z Marikeni, D Mark, X Matebese, A Mayekiso, A Mbiko, A Mboyiya, D Mhlauli, S Medley, F Meinck, P Mngese, S Mngese, P Mjo, S Mona, T Moyikwa, S Mpimpilashe, M Mpumlwana, S Mqalo, S Mwellie, P Myoyo, M Neel, U Ngesi, S Ngozi, P Nobatye, N Nurova, M Pantelic, L Parmley, L Pilard, T Ramncwana, A Robb, J Rosenfeld, B Saliwe, J Sandelson, L Sidloyi, I Skracic, R Smith, N Sontsonga, J Steinert, B Taleni, M Thabeng, E Toska, S Tshaka, T Tsiba, B Vale, T Walker, P Wardle.

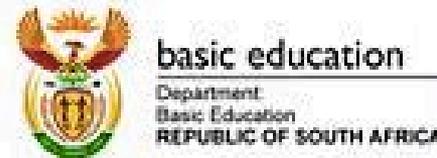
Research assistants: N Bhabbra, N Bobrowitz, K Kidia, A Naik, A Redfern.



The Leverhulme Trust



PEPFAR  
U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief



# Is Knowledge Power: HIV-status disclosure and safe sex

Elona Toska, Rebecca Hodes, Lucie Cluver – Universities of Cape Town & Oxford

- Knowing your HIV+ status as an adolescent girls is protective –girls who know their HIV+ status have safer sex.
- Telling a partner one's HIV+ status does not have protective effects – healthcare providers must be careful to recommend it to adolescent girls without providing support.
- Knowing one's partner HIV-status made it harder to have safe sex, maybe because of fear of losing the lover/ partner.