

Youth Leadership is a Preventive Wellbeing Intervention

We did a wellbeing impact survey with 1600+ young people who experienced youth leadership journeys. Here's what the data tells us...



Young people's wellbeing is under strain.

India's young adults (18-34) ranked **60th out of 84 countries** on mental wellbeing in the Global Mind Health Report (2025).

The report studied cognitive, emotional, social, and physical capacities and problems that enable or diminish our ability to function effectively in daily life.

Source: Sapien Labs

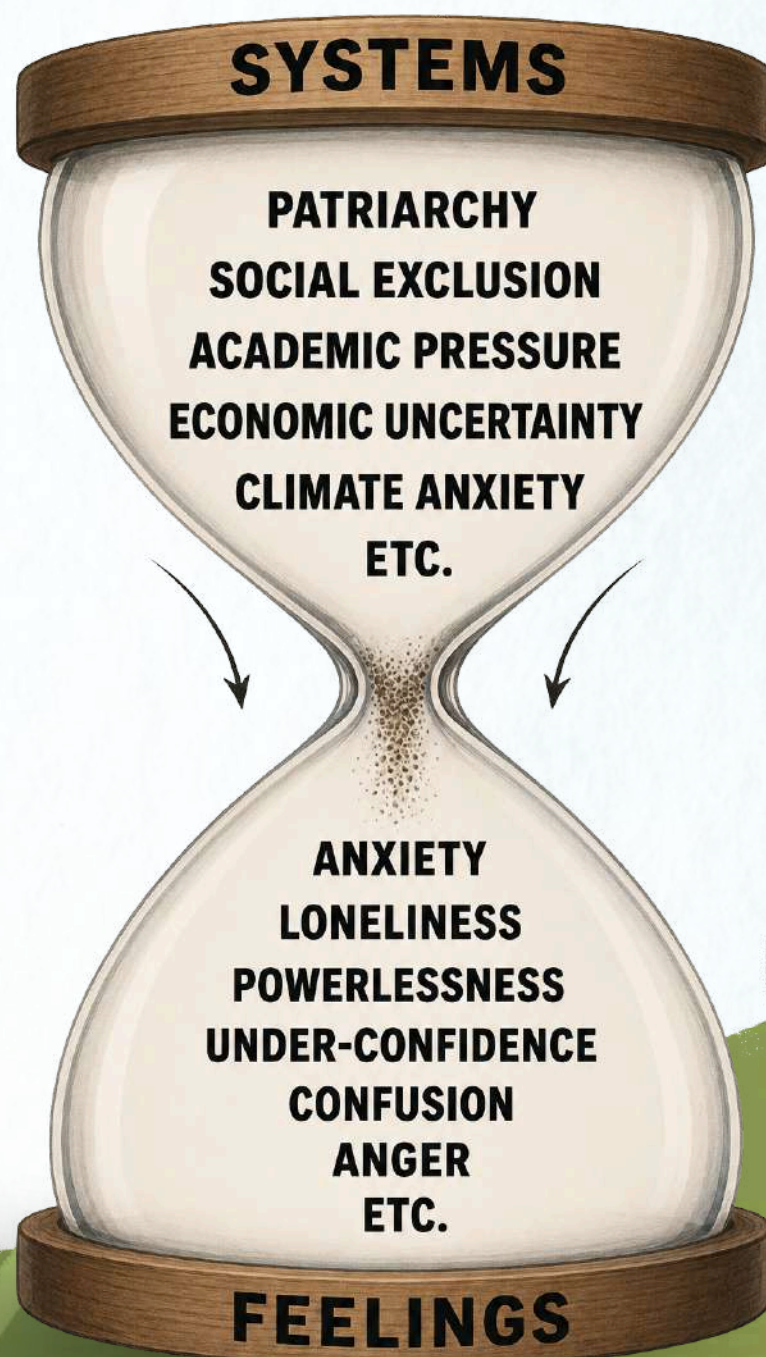


Young people's wellbeing is shaped by the systems they grow up in.

Youthhood is a period of self discovery, identity formation, developing a sense of belonging and building life aspirations.

Social inequalities and structural barriers make this journey significantly harder.

Together, it impacts wellbeing negatively.



Treatment alone cannot solve a socially produced challenge.

Clinical support is essential.
But wellbeing is also shaped by



Relationships



Belonging



Purpose



Agency



Community

**Therefore, We must invest in
prevention alongside treatment.**



Preventive wellbeing begins long before a crisis.

It is co-created in the everyday life when we invest in young people's



Self Transformation



Relationships



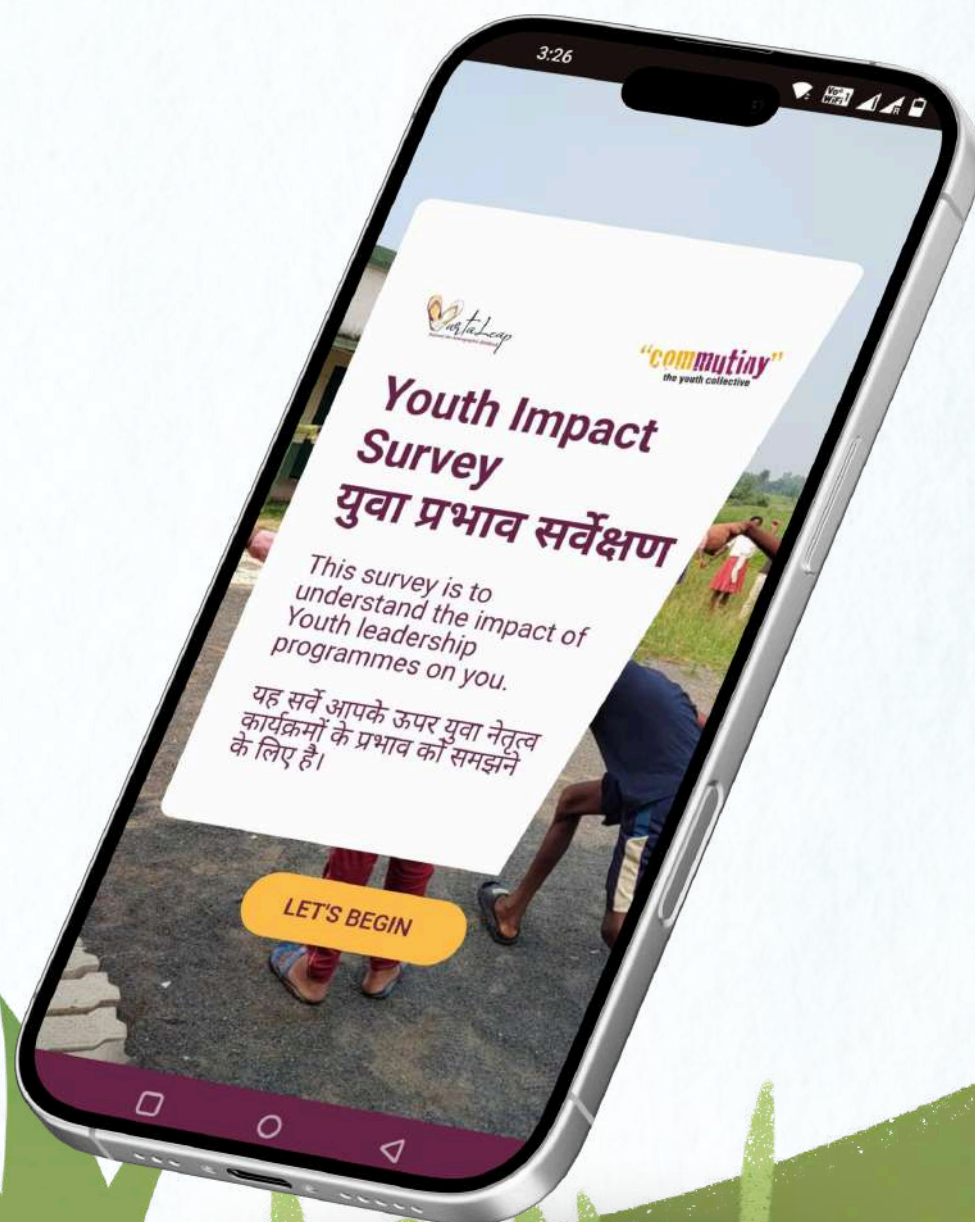
Active participation in community spaces



What Changes?

We surveyed 1600+ young people who have undergone youth leadership journeys with 50+ organisations in the vartaLeap coalition.

Across fourteen psychosocial parameters, young people **moved an average of four points towards positive wellbeing.**



Evidence From the Survey

Finding 1: Young people begin believing **they can shape their own lives.**

Across measures of confidence, clarity, empowerment, growth and freedom, participants reported an average improvement of 4.63 points, suggesting stronger agency and self-belief.

Finding 2: Young people become better **equipped to navigate emotions and everyday challenges.**

Improvements were seen in ability to cope and calmness, with an average increase of 4.36 points.



Finding 3: Relationships become more empathetic, trusting, and connected.

Young people reported stronger feelings of belonging and greater acceptance of others, with an average improvement of 4.47 points. 98.8% of respondents reported that they made more friends across differences, such as caste, religion, language, region, gender identity and economic background.

Finding 4: Young people begin seeing themselves as contributors to society rather than passive observers.

Purpose, hope for social change and a sense of responsibility towards society all strengthened, with an average improvement of 4.56 points.



The largest gains were among gender identities that started furthest behind

Women entered the programme reporting lower psychosocial wellbeing than men across the 14 indicators. By the end of the journey, this gap had effectively closed, with women reporting comparable overall wellbeing outcomes.

Gender	Before	After
Men	4.13	8.32
Women	3.63	8.38

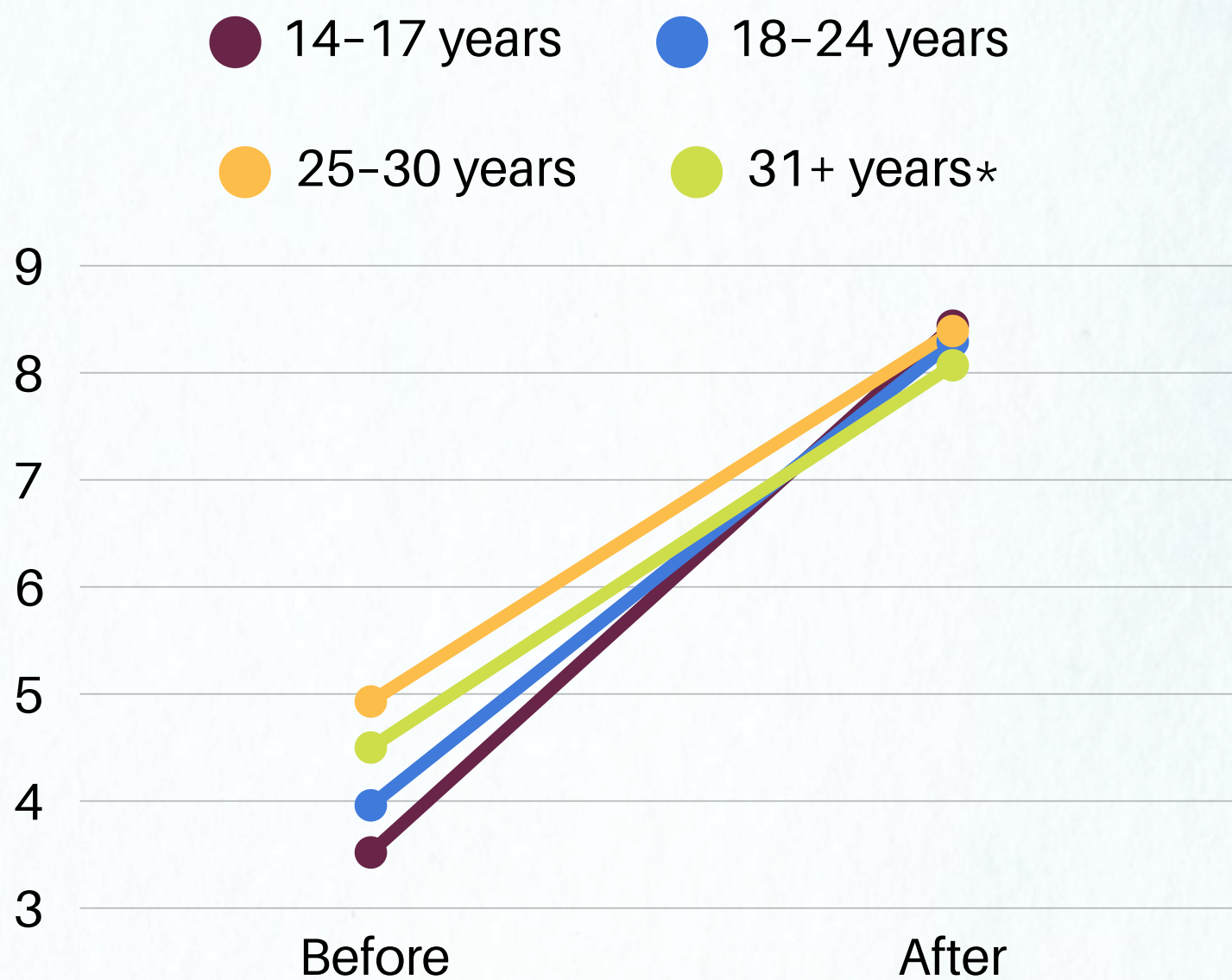
The largest gains were among caste identities that started furthest behind

Young people from historically marginalized groups entered the programme with lower reported psychosocial wellbeing. Following participation, their average wellbeing scores were comparable to those of non-marginalized participants.

Caste	Before	After
General	4.42	8.32
OBC	3.67	8.23
SC	3.63	8.56
ST	3.77	8.42

The largest gains were among younger people who started furthest behind

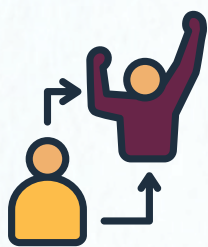
The strongest improvements were reported by adolescents (14-17 years), followed by young adults (18-24 years).



Youth leadership appears especially meaningful for young people facing multiple forms of disadvantage.

The largest reported wellbeing gains were among young women from historically marginalized caste communities, particularly SC women

This suggests youth leadership journeys may be especially meaningful for young people experiencing multiple forms of structural disadvantage.



Confidence
(+5.6)



Empowerment
(+5.4)



Freedom
(+5.3)



What Needs To Happen Next

If wellbeing is shaped socially, solutions must be social too.

For Young People

Join leadership journeys, collective action, and community engagement opportunities.

For CSOs

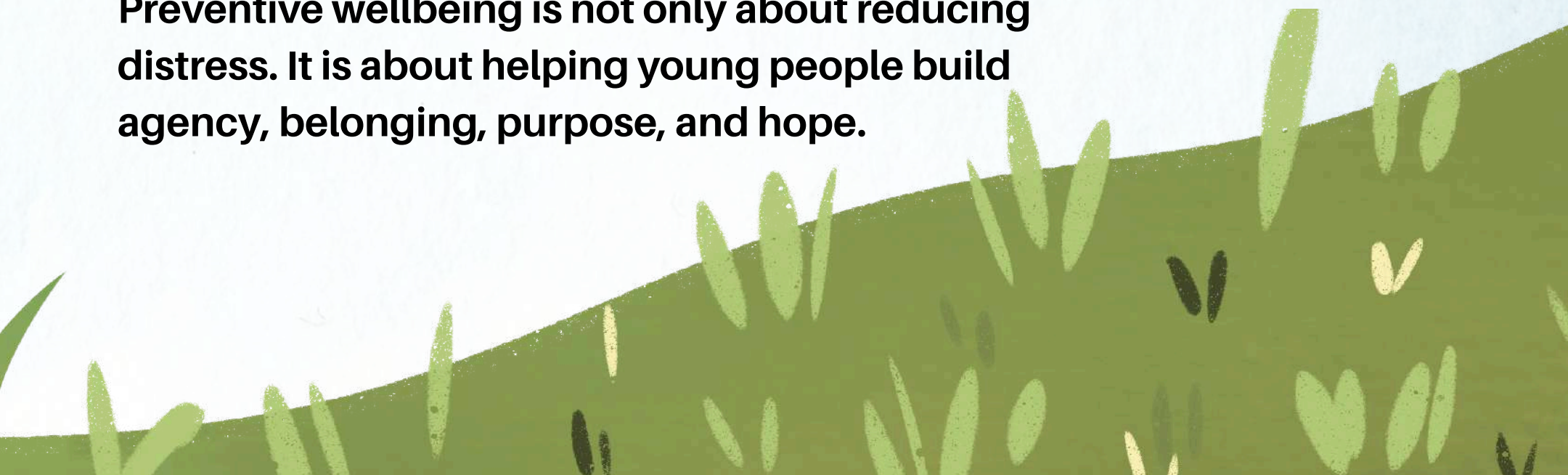
Design safe spaces, agency-building, self transformation experiences and community participation into programming.

For Donors

Invest in youth leadership as a preventive wellbeing strategy.

Final takeaway:

Preventive wellbeing is not only about reducing distress. It is about helping young people build agency, belonging, purpose, and hope.



Gratitude to vartaLeap members for contributing to the survey

Data collated from 1600+ young people across the country
who have gone through youth leadership journeys with
50+ youth-centric organisations in vartaLeap.

