

Family Violence Prevention Fund

The Facts on Teens and Dating Violence

While dating, domestic and sexual violence affect women regardless of their age, teens and young women are especially vulnerable. Women age 16 to 24 experience the highest rates of rape and sexual assault,¹ and people age 18 and 19 experience the highest rates of stalking.² Add to that the 15.5 million U.S. children who live in families in which partner violence occurred at least once in the past year³ and you have a huge number of young people in this country whose lives are affected – sometimes shaped – by violence.

Prevalence of Violence

- Approximately one in three adolescent girls in the United States is a victim of *physical, emotional or verbal abuse* from a dating partner – a figure that far exceeds victimization rates for other types of violence affecting youth.⁴
- Nationwide, nearly one in ten high-school students (8.9 percent) has been *hit, slapped or physically hurt* on purpose by a boyfriend or girlfriend.⁵
- Nearly one in three *sexually active* adolescent girls in ninth to twelfth grade (31.5 percent) report ever experiencing *physical or sexual violence* from dating partners.⁶
- One in four teen girls *in a relationship* (26 percent) says she has been threatened with violence or experienced verbal abuse, and 13 percent say they were physically hurt or hit.⁷
- One in three teens reports *knowing a friend or peer* who has been hit, punched, kicked, slapped or physically hurt by a partner, and 45 percent of girls know a friend or peer who has been pressured into having either intercourse or oral sex.⁸
- One in five tweens – age 11 to 14 – say their friends are victims of dating violence and nearly half who are in relationships know friends who are verbally abused. Two in five of the youngest tweens, ages 11 and 12, report that their friends are victims of verbal abuse in relationships.⁹

Consequences of Teen Dating Violence

- Teen victims of physical dating violence are more likely than their non-abused peers to smoke, use drugs, engage in unhealthy diet behaviors (taking diet pills or laxatives and vomiting to lose weight), engage in risky sexual behaviors, and attempt or consider suicide.¹⁰
- The one in five female public high school students in a Massachusetts study who reported ever experiencing physical or sexual violence from a dating partner were four to six times more likely than their non-abused peers to have been pregnant, and eight to nine times more likely to have attempted suicide in the past year.¹¹
- Compared with nonabused girls, those who experienced both physical and sexual dating violence are three times more likely to have been tested for sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and HIV, and more than twice as likely to report an STD diagnosis.¹²

Emerging Issues

- One in four teens in a relationship say they have been called names, harassed or put down by their partner through cellphones and texting.¹³
- One in five teen girls and one in ten younger teen girls (13 to 16) have electronically sent or posted nude or semi-nude photos or videos of themselves. Even more teen girls, 37 percent, have sent or posted sexually suggestive text, email or IM (instant messages).¹⁴
- More than half of teen girls (51 percent) say pressure from a guy is a reason girls send sexy messages or images, while only 18 percent of teen boys say pressure from a girl is a reason. Twelve percent of teen girls who *have* sent sexually suggestive messages or images say they felt “pressured” to do so.¹⁵

Some Parents Are Out of Touch

- In a 2009 survey of parents, three in four parents say they have had a conversation with their teen about what it means to be in a healthy relationship – but 74 percent of sons and 66 percent of daughters said they have not had a conversation about dating abuse with a parent in the past year.¹⁶
- Though more than four in five parents (82 percent) feel confident that they could recognize the signs if their child was experiencing dating abuse, a majority of parents (58 percent) could not correctly identify all the warning signs of abuse.¹⁷
- Of the teens in an abusive relationships, fewer than one in three (32 percent) confide in their parents about their abusive relationship.¹⁸

¹ Rand, Michael. 2009. *Criminal Victimization, 2008*. U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Statistics. Available at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/abstract/cv08.htm>.

² Baum, Katrina, Catalano, Shannan, Rand, Michael and Rose, Kristina. 2009. *Stalking Victimization in the United States*. U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Statistics. Available at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/svus.pdf>.

³ McDonald, R, Jouriles, E, Ramisetty-Mikler, S. et al. 2006. Estimating the Number of American Children Living in Partner-Violent Families. *Journal of Family Psychology* 20(1): 137-142.

⁴ Davis, Antoinette, MPH. 2008. Interpersonal and Physical Dating Violence among Teens. The National Council on Crime and Delinquency Focus. Available at http://www.nccd-crc.org/nccd/pubs/2008_focus_teen_dating_violence.pdf.

⁵ Grunbaum JA, Kann L, Kinchen S, et al. 2004. Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance --- United States, 2003. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*. 53(SS02);1-96. Available at <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/ss5302a1.htm>.

⁶ Decker M, Silverman J, Raj A. 2005. Dating Violence and Sexually Transmitted Disease/HIV Testing and Diagnosis Among Adolescent Females. *Pediatrics*. 116: 272-276.

⁷ Liz Claiborne Inc. 2005. Omnibuzz® Topline Findings-Teen Relationship Abuse Research. Teenage Research Unlimited. Available at <http://www.loveisnotabuse.com/surveyresults.htm>.

⁸Ibid

⁹ Tween and Teen Dating Violence and Abuse Study, Teenage Research Unlimited for Liz Claiborne Inc. and the National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline. February 2008. Available at <http://www.loveisnotabuse.com/pdf/Tween%20Dating%20Abuse%20Full%20Report.pdf>.

¹⁰ Silverman, J, Raj A, et al. 2001. Dating Violence Against Adolescent Girls and Associated Substance Use, Unhealthy Weight Control, Sexual Risk Behavior, Pregnancy, and Suicidality. *JAMA*. 286:572-579. Available at <http://jama.ama-assn.org/cgi/reprint/286/5/572>.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Decker M, Silverman J, Raj A. 2005. Dating Violence and Sexually Transmitted Disease/HIV Testing and Diagnosis Among Adolescent Females. *Pediatrics*. 116: 272-276.

¹³ Liz Claiborne and TRU. 2007. Tech Abuse in Teen Relationships Study. Available at <http://www.loveisnotabuse.com/pdf/06-208%20Tech%20Relationship%20Abuse%20TPL.pdf>.

¹⁴ The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy and CosmoGirl.com. 2008. Sex and Tech: Results from a Survey of Teens and Young Adults. Available at http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/sextech/PDF/SexTech_Summary.pdf.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Impact of the Economy and Parent/Teen Dialogue on Dating Relationships and Abuse. 2009. Conducted by Teenage Research Unlimited for the Family Violence Prevention Fund and Liz Claiborne. Available at <http://www.loveisnotabuse.com/pdf/Liz%20Claiborne%20Teen%20Dating%20Abuse%20and%20the%20Economy%20Research%20RPT.pdf>.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.