



Teen Dating Violence Fact Sheet

Overview

Young people are capable of being in healthy and loving relationships, and teenagers specifically are at a developmental age when they feel ready to begin dating. In these early years, their experience (or absence) of boundaries, communication, and safety can have profound impacts on their future relationships and holistic wellness. The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) defines teen dating violence (TDV) as intimate partner violence between two teenagers, in which one partner is physically or sexually violent, psychologically aggressive, or stalks the other partner. Advocates name TDV specifically to confront the stigma around teenage relationships, understanding the further harm that teens can face if they feel that adults will punish or judge them if they ask for support.

Prevalence

While there is insufficient research about TDV generally, the existing studies and reports point to the real violence and harm that young people can experience in their dating and sexual relationships. This prevalence is found in high school and middle school alike, pointing to the need for early age prevention.

- According to the [2019 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey](#), of high schoolers who had dated in the past year, 8.2% experienced sexual violence and equally, 8.2% were physically hurt on purpose by their partner.
- The [2009 Teen Dating Abuse Report](#) indicated that nearly half of teenage respondents had a dating partner try to control them, and 3 out of 10 responded that they had a dating partner physically or sexually threaten or abuse them.
- In the [2008 Tween and Teen Dating Violence and Abuse Study](#), 47% of tweens (11-14) responded that they have been in a dating relationship, and 6 out of 10 tweens who had been in a relationship reported that they know friends who have been verbally abused by a dating partner.

Impact

TDV not only leaves an emotional toll on young people, but is also correlated with higher likelihood of unhealthy behaviors, suicidal ideation, disordered eating, and re-victimization.

- Futures Without Violence's [The Connection Between Dating Violence and Unhealthy Behaviors](#) report notes that teenagers who've experienced physical dating violence are more likely to engage in disordered eating, to smoke or use drugs, and to attempt or consider suicide.

- The [National Council on Crime and Delinquency's analysis of data](#) from San Francisco and Los Angeles' Youth Risk Behavioral Survey indicated that high school girls who had been physically abused by a dating partner were twice as likely not to attend school due to feeling unsafe as their non-abused peers.
- A [2013 study of 6,000 teens](#) demonstrated that teens who had experienced dating violence in adolescence were two to three times more likely to be abused by a dating partner later in young adulthood.

These studies and reports point to the gravity of TDV's impact on young people's emotional and physical wellness, and the need to engage in awareness campaigns and prevention education early.

Role of Prevention Education

Research indicates that early TDV prevention programming can have a significant and positive impact on teenagers' ability to recognize warning signs of TDV, understand how to help a friend, and identify healthy relationship behaviors.

- In the 2009 Teen Dating Abuse Report, of the teens who had taken a course about healthy relationships in school, 3 out of 4 responded that they learned about warning signs and were confident that they could determine if a relationship was abusive, and 65% found the class helpful.
- The evidence-based Safe Dates curriculum [went through a multi-year evaluation study](#) in 2004 with yearly follow-ups four years after. The study revealed lower likelihood of Safe Dates participants both perpetrating and experiencing physical, sexual, and psychological abuse.

While additional evaluation is needed for healthy relationship curricula, these studies point to the effectiveness of prevention programming. When both young people and adults are more aware of warning signs (such as physical aggression, throwing or breaking things, controlling behavior, extreme jealousy, hurtful comments, digital or in-person stalking, and sexual coercion), a foundation is built to promote healthier alternatives in relationships. Advocates promote open and honest communication, trust, mutual respect and support, and equality as key in healthy relationships.

Community-Wide Response

[The CDC recommends](#) that a crucial strategy of preventing dating violence is engaging influential adults in young people's lives. By developing appropriate school policy, promoting prevention programming, and educating adults about the prevalence and impact of TDV, we can create a nurturing, supportive community that surrounds teens at school, home, and other spaces where they spend their time. With this community-wide response, teens can more fully understand healthy behaviors and attitudes in dating relationships, the support and resources that are available to them if they are harmed, and their role in ending violence more broadly.

Getting Support

In addition to on-the-ground support from the [OVW Children & Youth and Engaging Men grantee programs](#) across the country, [Love Is Respect](#) is a national resource that offers 24/7 information, support, and advocacy to young people between the ages of 13 and 26 who have questions or concerns about their romantic relationships.

- Live chat & resources: loveisrespect.org
- Textline: Text “love is” to 25222
- Hotline: 1-866-331-9474

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