

Teen Dating Violence

FACT SHEET

Dating violence represented 7% of total violent crimes in Canada in 2008.

Police statistics confirm the number of victims of dating violence is highest among 15 – 24 year olds. This represents 43% of all incidents.

Among teenagers aged 15 - 19, police-reported rates of dating violence experienced by females was 10 times higher than for males.

Adolescent victims of police-reported dating violence were most often victimized by an older suspect.

Victimization from dating violence is associated with lower psychological well-being and physical health problems.

Statistics Canada, 2010



What is dating violence?

Dating violence refers to abuse or mistreatment that occurs between dating partners or those in the process of developing an intimate relationship. This includes when two people first meet or become interested in one another, on their first date, during their courtship, once they have been involved with each other for some time, or after their relationship has ended. Dating violence may also occur in heterosexual or same-sex relationships.

Although dating violence may occur at any stage of life, much of the research on dating violence has focused on adolescents and university/college aged students. Current research suggests that a significant percentage of teenagers have experienced at least some degree of physical, sexual or emotional abuse from a dating partner. Among adolescents, those who have experienced dating violence either as a victim or perpetrator (or both), ranges between 30 to 80%.

Dating violence may be a single act of violence, such as sexual assault or date rape. It may also involve a pattern of repeated mistreatment that can escalate over time. The perpetrator of violence may act alone or in the context of a group setting.

Types of abuse

Those who mistreat others may use a number of tactics to exert power and control over their victims. One or more of the following types of abuse may even co-occur:

Physical abuse - anything involving the use of force; even if it does not result in a physical injury (eg. Restraining, shaking, kicking, biting, choking, or causing burns to someone).

Sexual abuse - all forms of sexual harassment, sexual coercion, or sexual assault. Sexual harassment includes unwanted or unwelcome sexual behaviour, actions or words, and may include things such as making lewd comments or gestures to cause embarrassment. Sexual coercion includes manipulating a person or situation unfairly in order to engage in sex. Sexual assault includes kissing, fondling, touching, oral sex, or sexual intercourse without consent, including forcing someone to engage in the acts listed above.

Psychological abuse - dominating behaviours, such as verbal put-downs and social isolation. This may include constantly criticizing someone, stalking someone, vandalizing personal property, or excessive jealousy or possessiveness that results in not allowing a person to be with friends or talking to others.

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Help Lines and Referral Information

BC Crisis Line (24 hr)
www.crisiscentre.bc.ca
1.866.661.3311
604.872.3311

Rape Relief Line:
www.rapereliefshelter.bc.ca
1.604.872.8212

Youth Against Violence Line:
1.800.680.4268

Teen Central.net Podcasts for Teens
www.teencentral.net/podcasts

Love Isn't Supposed to Leave Bruises
<http://www.redcross.ca/article.asp?id=11812&tid=001>

Centre for Public Safety and Criminal Justice Research

33844 King Road
Abbotsford, BC
V2S 7M8
604 854-4553
<http://cjr.ufv.ca>

What factors play a role in dating violence?

As either a perpetrator of dating violence or a victim of it, there are certain factors that may contribute to dating violence. These include ones' belief system and attitudes (eg. believing it is okay to coerce someone to have sex even if they are drunk), past experience of abuse, relational skills, drinking and drug use, seriousness of a dating relationship, exposure to media (normalization of violence), and peer influence.

Age and gender play a role in dating violence as well. For example, in abusive dating relationships, sexual, physical and sexual violence often co-occur. Older adolescents are more likely to have experienced psychological aggression and sexual aggression in a dating relationship. Research has shown that adolescent women are more likely than adolescent men to be punched or forced into sexual activity, and respond by crying, fighting back, running away, or complying with an abusive partner. Adolescent men are more likely to experience pinching, slapping, scratching, or kicking by partners, and then become dismissive about it happening.

How might others recognize dating violence?

Signs of an abusive partner may include having low tolerance, mood swings, extreme jealousy or possessiveness. In addition, becoming serious about a relationship too quickly, wanting to make all the decisions, or manipulating and controlling contact with other people are also potential warning signs.

Recognizing whether someone may be abused by their partner can result in low self-esteem, withdrawal, depression, nervousness, or unexplained cuts, bruises, burns, or bite marks. Victims of abuse may also stop participating in activities they previously enjoyed and may have difficulty concentrating.

Responding to teen dating violence

Teen dating violence is far less likely to be reported than adult domestic violence. Only one in eleven episodes of teen violence was reported to adults or authorities.⁴ Parents, teachers and other adult role models can play an important role in preventing adolescent dating violence by encouraging youth to speak up and report dating violence to a teacher, a school nurse,³ or another trusted adult. The prevention of dating violence can also be achieved through community or school-based educational curriculums.