

Fact Sheet

Dating Violence

The YWCA Week Without Violence™, the third week in October, is an international initiative created by YWCA USA in 1995 to mobilize people in communities all across the United States and the world to take action against all forms of violence, wherever it occurs.

Week
without
Violence

Background

Dating violence occurs when one partner attempts to maintain power and control over the other through one or more forms of abuse, including sexual, physical, verbal and emotional abuse. Dating violence affects both females and males, and does not discriminate by racial, social or economic background. Studies suggest that adolescent women are the most vulnerable age group impacted by dating violence, with one in every three young women facing violence by means of physical, emotional or verbal abuse. Given the prevalence of domestic violence within dating relationships, communities must work together to prevent these violent relationships and ensure that victims of dating violence have adequate access to legal protection.

YWCA Position

The YWCA supports public policies that protect victims, hold perpetrators accountable and work to eradicate sexual assault, domestic violence, trafficking of women and dating violence. The YWCA recognizes the need for anti-violence programs and policies to be multifaceted and diverse in both their approaches to addressing violence against women and young girls and in

assisting all victims of violence. Local direct service programs across the nation provide critical preventative and educational programs for young women and girls that help them gain interpersonal skills, build confidence, enrich technical skills in math and science and empower them to make intelligent and informed decisions about their lives.

The YWCA supports the continuance and full funding for the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), which contains critical provisions that address the prevalence and prevention of violence against young girls and women in college. VAWA has historically received bipartisan support since 1994 and the YWCA strongly supports the continuance of this support in future funding decisions as a critical component in working towards awareness and prevention programs to address dating violence in schools, college campuses and through direct service programs.

Facts

- One in three young girls in the U.S. is a victim of physical, verbal or emotional violence.¹
- Young women between the ages of 20-24 are

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the most vulnerable age group to be impacted by domestic and dating violence, followed by young women ages 16-19, the highest per capita rates of non-fatal intimate partner violence.²

- According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), 1.3 million women reported being raped or sexually assaulted in 2009.
- Domestic and dating violence are largely gender-based crimes, with women accounting for 86 percent of victims in cases involving partners or boyfriends.³
- According to a National Center for Victims of Crime study, almost half of students who experienced some form of dating violence indicated that some of the abuse occurred on school grounds.⁴ This not only highlights the need for stricter policies at schools to monitor student activity while on school property, but also to educate teens and young adults about dating violence and how to address it.
- Children are witnessing violence in their homes at record rates, with 15.5 million children having witnessed it at least once in their homes. Seven million children live in homes in which severe intimate partner violence has occurred.⁵ Because children learn from social cues, witnessing and experiencing violence in the home at such young ages can often result distorted perceptions about dating and healthy relationships.
- One in three young girls is a victim of physical, verbal, or emotional abuse in the United States.⁶

- Most teens report being in or knowing others in violent relationships. One in five claim that their friends are experiencing dating violence and half report that their friends are in verbally abusive relationships.⁷
- Dating violence among teens results in higher risks of drug abuse, tobacco use, and suicide.⁸

Reporting Dating Abuse

- While young women and girls experience the highest rates of violence, they also are less likely to report incidences of violence to their parents or guardians, guidance counselors, teachers or professors, or law enforcement.⁹ Instead, young women and girls are more likely to tell a friend or their peers about experiencing dating violence, presenting a unique barrier for service providers to reach out to and work with adolescents on addressing and preventing abusive relationships. This also highlights an opportunity to create and implement programs targeting adolescents that empower and educate their peers on how to intervene and assist when a friend reports that she is experiencing violence.

Technology and Abuse

- Beyond physical abuse, technology is increasingly becoming a tool for perpetrators of violence to harass and control a victim. In a study conducted by Liz Claiborne, one in four teens indicated that they have been harassed, called names, or verbally abused by a partner through text messages and phone calls.¹⁰
- Victims as young as 11 years old have reported that cell phones have been used as

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a method of tracking their whereabouts by abusive partners, with 24 percent reporting that they received 20 or more harassing or controlling text messages a day.¹¹

pregnancy coercion, and birth control sabotage¹⁶ – resulting in early pregnancies that are often high risk due to increased likelihood of violence before, during, and shortly after pregnancy.

Health Effects

- Dating violence has a devastating impact on young adults and adolescents, with a direct correlation between higher rates of binge drinking, fighting, use of tobacco, and an increased risk of suffering from mental illness.¹²
- Teenagers who experience violence are likely to exhibit risky behavior at school, with higher rates of truancy, and a higher risk of conflict with their peers and teachers. They are also more likely to learn poor coping mechanisms, resulting in a higher likelihood to bring in guns and other weapons to school due to an inability to manage conflict and disagreements.¹³
- Teenagers experiencing dating violence are three times as likely to get into physical fights¹⁴ – an indicator that educators and guidance counselors can use as a warning sign for students that have a tendency to cope with conflict through physical fights and aggression.
- Access to money, shelter, and transportation are key barriers that limit young victims from leaving an abusive relationship¹⁵ – and because most young victims do not report violence to adults or law enforcement, they have little guidance on how to seek safety.
- Young female victims of violence have alarmingly high rates of sexual assault,

State Dating Violence Laws

- Many states require a victim to be married to, live with, or have a child in common with the perpetrator in order for criminal and civil domestic violence laws to protect the victim. This can leave young victims of violence with little or no safe options for leaving an abusive relationship.
- Victims who are minors in 45 states and the District of Columbia are able to access protective orders against a partner with consent of a parent or guardian. Missouri explicitly prohibits minors from doing so. Four states do not specify whether minors can access protective orders: North Dakota, South Dakota, Ohio and Wyoming.¹⁷
- Nine states and the District of Columbia allow minors to petition for protection orders on their own, including: California, Minnesota, New Hampshire, Oklahoma, Oregon, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Utah and Washington.
- Nine states explicitly prohibit minors from petitioning on their own for a protective order: Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana, Maine, Mississippi, New Jersey, Texas and Wisconsin.
- Fifteen states have laws that allow petitioners to file protective orders against other minors, while five states strictly prohibit it: Maryland, Missouri, Nevada, New Jersey and Oregon.

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Legislation

- Signed into law by President Clinton in 1994, the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) is a landmark law that aims to prevent and end violence against women and girls. VAWA increased criminal penalties for crimes against women, including domestic violence, stalking and sexual assault; enhanced penalties for repeat sex offenders; and improved laws regarding protection orders, sex-offender registration and interstate domestic violence. VAWA also created a toll-free domestic violence hotline and provided federal funding to combat violence against women and girls.
- In 2000, VAWA was reauthorized with key components added to it that focused on strengthening the criminal response to violence against women. It improved law enforcement responses to domestic violence, enhanced education and training on violence against women issues and provided services for populations that faced specific barriers to accessing services, such as immigrants and ethnic communities. In addition to this, it placed a spotlight on dating violence and the need to provide preventative education to young adults. VAWA was reauthorized again in 2013, focusing on assistance for LGBTQ victims, immigrant and Native American women.
- VAWA has proven that it is possible to prevent and end violence against women. Since the law was first passed in 1994, domestic violence reporting has increased 51 percent, and all states have strengthened rape laws and have made stalking a crime.

The number of individuals killed by intimate partners has decreased by 34 percent for women and 57 percent for men. VAWA-funded programs saved \$12.6 billion in its first six years alone, from 1994-2000.¹⁸

Resources

1 is 2 Many Campaign, The White House
www.whitehouse.gov/1is2many

Break the Cycle www.breakthecycle.org

Futures Without Violence
www.futureswithoutviolence.org

Jewish Women International www.jwi.org

National Coalition Against Domestic Violence
www.ncadv.org

National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs
www.avp.org/ncavp.htm

National Congress of American Indians www.ncai.org

National Task Force to End Sexual and Domestic Violence www.4vawa.org

Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network (RAINN)
www.rainn.org

U.S. Department of Justice Office on Violence Against Women www.ojp.usdoj.gov/vawo

Sources

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² *National Crime Victimization Survey: Criminal Victimization, 2007. 2008*. U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics. <http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/content/pub/pdf/cv08.pdf>

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³ *Family Violence Statistics: Including Statistics on Strangers and Acquaintances*. 2005. U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics. <http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/content/pub/pdf/fvs02.pdf>

⁴ Nunez, Michell and Madeline Wordes. "Our Vulnerable Teenagers: Their Victimization, Its Consequences, and Directions for Prevention and Intervention." National Council on Crime and Delinquency and National Center for Victims of Crime. May 2002.

⁵ Whitfield, CL, Anda RF, Dube SR, Felittle VJ. 2003. Violent Childhood Experiences and the Risk of Intimate Partner Violence in Adults: Assessment in a Large Health Maintenance Organization. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*. 18(2): 166-185.

⁶ Davis, Antoinette, MPH. 2008. *Interpersonal and Physical Dating Violence among Teens*. The National Council on Crime and Delinquency Focus. http://www.ocjs.ohio.gov/TDVMonth/Interpersonal_Teens.pdf

⁷ Tween and Teen Dating Violence and Abuse Study, Teenage Research Unlimited for Liz Claiborne Inc. and the National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline. February 2008. http://www.loveisnotabuse.com/pdf/Tween_percent20Dating_percent20Abuse_percent20Full_percent20Report.pdf

⁸ 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. <http://jama.ama-assn.org/cgi/reprint/286/5/572>

⁹ Roberts TA, Klein J. Intimate Partner Abuse and High-Risk Behavior in Adolescents. *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine* 2003; 157:375-380.

¹⁰ Liz Claiborne and TRU. 2007. Tech Abuse in Teen Relationships Study. <http://www.loveisnotabuse.com>

¹¹ Liz Claiborne and TRU. February 2008. Tween and Teen Dating Violence and Abuse Study. <http://www.loveisnotabuse.com>

¹² Seave, P., & Lockyer, B. (2004). *Teen Dating Violence*. Office of the Attorney General and the Crime and Violence Prevention Center, WestEd.

¹³ Drafted on behalf of the California Attorney General's Office. "A Preventable Epidemic: Teen Dating Violence and its Impact on School Safety and Academic Achievement." Tenth Biennial California Student Survey. 2003-4.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Break the Cycle. *2010 State Law Report Cards: National Survey of Teen Dating Violence Laws*. 2010. <http://www.loveisrespect.org/sites/default/files/2010-State-Law-Report-Cards-Full-Report.pdf>, p.6

¹⁶ Miller, E., Decker, M., McCauley, H., Tancredi, D., Levenson, R., Waldman, J., Schoenwald, P., and Silverman, J. 2010. Pregnancy coercion, intimate partner violence, and unintended pregnancy. *Contraception*, 81(4) 316-322.

¹⁷ Break the Cycle. *2010 State Law Report Cards: National Survey of Teen Dating Violence Laws*. 2010 <http://www.loveisrespect.org/sites/default/files/2010-State-Law-Report-Cards-Full-Report.pdf>, p.7

¹⁸ Ibid.

