

Teen Dating Violence: The Facts

- 28% of high school and college students surveyed said that they had experienced violence in a dating relationship.¹
- Both male and female teens are victims of dating violence. However, boys inflict more serious physical injuries on girls than girls inflict on boys.²
 - Boys are more likely to be pinched, slapped, scratched, or kicked by dating partners.
 - Girls are much more at risk for severe violence, sexual violence, and injuries requiring medical attention.
- Young women, ages 16 to 24 years, experience the highest rates of relationship violence.³
- If violence occurs once in a dating relationship, it is likely to occur again.⁴
- Young people tend to interpret their partner's violence as a sign of love.⁵ It may first emerge as occasional outbursts, interpreted as expressions of passion.⁶
 - In some relationships, dating violence may never move beyond emotional and verbal abuse.
 - In other relationships, it escalates from verbal abuse to physical and sexual violence, or involves a mix of physical, verbal, and emotional abuse from the start.
- 75% of assaults and homicides reported to the police occur after the victim has left his/her assailant.⁷
- The majority of violence occurs during either the steady or serious dating phase of a relationship.⁸
- Even when young people do not seek professional help, many choose to talk to friends about relationship violence.⁹



- Very few teens tell their parents or other adults they are involved in abusive relationships.¹⁰ Explanations for secretiveness include:
 - Failure to understand they are victims.
 - Embarrassment, shame, confusion.
 - Threats from the abuser.
 - Fear the abuser will take revenge if they say anything.
 - Concern their parents will prevent them seeing the abuser.
 - Concern they will lose privileges like the use of a car or freedom to go out as they please.

- Reasons teens stay in abusive dating relationships vary but include:¹¹
 - Continuing emotional attachment
 - Feeling in love with/attracted to the abuser.
 - Fear that the abuser will hurt or kill them if they leave.
 - Lack of experience with healthy, non-abusive relationships.
 - Confusing jealousy and possessiveness with romance.
 - Social pressure to have and keep a boyfriend/girlfriend.
 - Isolation or alienation from friends and family members.
 - Feelings of low self-esteem and lack of confidence.

1. Levy, Barrie, 1991. Dating Violence: Young Women in Danger. Seattle, WA, Seal Press.
2. National Center for Victims of Crime, 2004
3. National Center for Victims of Crime, 2004
4. Levy, Barrie, 1991
5. Levy, Barrie, 1991
6. National Center for Victims of Crime, 2004
7. Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1991.
8. Levy, Barrie, 1991. Arias, L. Samios. M and O'Leary, K.D., 1987. Prevalence and correlates of physical aggression during courtship. Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 2(1), 82-90.
9. Levy, Barrie, 1991
10. National Center for Victims of Crime, 2004
11. Ibid