



Formerly Family Violence Prevention Fund

Emerging Issues Facing Tweens and Teens

Young people age 12 to 19 experience the highest rates of rape and sexual assault,¹ people age 18 and 19 experience the highest rates of stalking,² and 15.5 million U.S. children live in families in which partner violence occurred at least once in the past year.³ That is partly because, every day teens and tweens deal with issues that members of older generations never contemplated – How do I get help if my boyfriend/girlfriend is pressuring me to send a sexy text? Should I break up with my boyfriend/girlfriend on Facebook? What do I do if someone is spreading online rumors about me? Emerging issues like sexting, sexual coercion and bullying help create a serious problem for millions of youth.

Sexting and Technology

- One in four teens in a relationship say they have been called names, harassed or put down by their partner through cellphones and texting.⁴
- 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).⁵
- 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.⁶

Sexual Coercion

- Nearly half (45 percent) of girls in an online study said they know a friend or peer who has been pressured into having either intercourse or oral sex.⁷
- One in ten 15-year-old girls who dated someone within the past six months reported experiencing sexual coercion by a dating partner.⁸
- Data from the 2001 National Youth Risk Behavior Survey of 9th through 12th grade students found that 10 percent of females and 5 percent of males have experienced forced sex in their lifetime.⁹

Bullying

- Students, both male and female, who reported that they had perpetrated physical dating violence were nearly five times more likely to report perpetrating physical peer violence.¹⁰
- In a cross-sectional study with 369 middle school and 315 high school youth, bully-victims (students who were both bullied and who bullied others) reported significantly more physical and emotional dating violence victimization compared to three other bullying subtypes: uninvolved, victims and bullies.¹¹
- Victims of bullying also reported the highest rates of being victims of sexual harassment by their peers.¹²

¹ Truman, Jennifer and Rand, Michael. 2010. *Criminal Victimization, 2009*. U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Statistics. Available at <http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/content/pub/pdf/cv09.pdf>.

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.

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- ⁴ 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>.
- ⁵ 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.
- ⁶ Ibid.
- ⁷ Liz Claiborne Inc. 2005. Omnibuzz® Topline Findings-Teen Relationship Abuse Research. Teenage Research Unlimited. Available at <http://www.loveisnotabuse.com/surveyresults.htm>.
- ⁸ Hebert M, Lavoie F, Vitaro F, McDuff P & Tremblay RE. 2008. Association of Child Sexual Abuse and Dating Victimization with Mental Health Disorder in a Sample of Adolescent Girls. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*. 21(2): 181-189.
- ⁹ Howard DE & Wang MQ. 2005. Psychosocial Correlates of U.S Adolescents Who Report a History of Forced Sexual Intercourse. *Journal of Adolescent Health*. 36:372-379.
- ¹⁰ Swahn MH, Simon TR, Hertz MF, Arias I, Bossarte RM, Ross JG, Gross LA, Iachan R & Hamburger ME. 2008. Linking Dating Violence, Peer Violence, and Suicidal Behaviors among High-Risk Youth. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*. 34(1): 30-38.
- ¹¹ Espelage DL & Holt MK. 2007. Dating Violence & Sexual Harrassment Across the Bully-Victim Continuum among Middle and High School Students. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*. 36:799-811.
- ¹² Ibid.