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Tween/Teen Dating Relationships Survey 2008

Dating relationships and dating violence and abuse start by age 11, much earlier than expected.

Early dating with sexual activity appears to fuel extremely high levels of dating violence and abuse during the teen years.

TRU was commissioned by Liz Claiborne Inc. and Loveisrespect.org, the National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline to conduct quantitative research among **tweens** (ages 11-14), **parents** of tweens, and **teens (ages 15 18) who have been in a relationship** about young dating relationships and the presence/absence of sexual activity and abusive behaviors. TRU independently sampled the three groups and fielded a customized 15-minute survey online to each group. A total of 2,192 interviews (1,043 tweens, 523 parents, and 626 teens) were completed and processed for analysis.

Dating relationships begin much earlier than expected

- Nearly three in four tweens (72%) say boyfriend/girlfriend relationships usually begin at age 14 or younger.
- More than one in three 11-12 year olds (37%) say they have been in a relationship.

Sex is considered by tweens and parents to be a normal part of a relationship for 11-14 year old kids!

- More than one in four kids and parents say sexual activity is part of boyfriend-girlfriend relationships for tweens.
 - 27% of tweens and 26% of parents say oral sex is part of relationships for that age group.
 - 28% of tweens said having sex (going all the way) is a normal part of relationships for their age; and 26% of parents agreed.
 - More than one in four kids and parents say sexual activity is part of boyfriend-girlfriend relationships for tweens.
- However, when thinking of their own sons or daughters, only 7% of parents believe that their 11-14 year old has gone further than kissing or making out.
 - Only 11% of parents report that their son's/daughter's friends/peers have had sex (gone all the way).

A third of all 11-14 year old kids in relationships report that sexual behavior is evident among their friends

- Nearly one-third of tweens in relationships (31%) say they know friends and peers who have had oral sex.
- One in three tweens who are in a relationships (33%) say they know friends/peers who have had sex (gone all the way).

11-14 year olds in relationships report surprising, significant levels of abusive behavior in dating relationships

- Nearly half of all tweens in relationships (47%) say they know friends who have been verbally abused (called stupid, worthless, ugly, etc.) by a boyfriend/girlfriend.
- One in five 13-14 year olds in relationships (20%) say they know friends and peers who have been struck in anger (kicked, hit, slapped, or punched) by a boyfriend or girlfriend.
- More than a third of tweens in relationships (36%) know friends and peers their age who have been pressured by a boyfriend/girlfriend to do things they didn't want to do.
- Two in five 11-14 year olds in relationships (41%) know friends who have been verbally abused-called names, put down, or insulted-via cellphone, IM, social networking sites (like MySpace and Facebook), etc.
- One in four tweens (24%) say dating violence-physically hurting relationship partners-is a serious problem for people their age.
- Still, half of all tweens (49%) didn't claim to know the warning signs of a bad/hurtful tween-dating relationship.

Significant numbers of teens are experiencing emotional and mental abuse and violence in their dating relationships; this is even more alarming among teens who have had sex by the age of 14

For the first time, data has revealed an alarming correlation between early sexual experiences and teen dating violence and abuse.

- Among all teens age 15-18, one in ten (10%) indicate they have been physically abused by an angry partner (kicked, punched, choked, slapped, or hit).
 - By contrast, an alarming one out of three teens who had sex by age 14 (33%) say they have endured such beatings.

- More than one in three teens report that their partners wanted to know where they were (36%) and who they were with (37%) all the time.
 - Among teens who had sex by age 14, it's much higher (58% and 59%, respectively).
- 29% of teens say their boyfriends/girlfriends call them names and put them down, compared to 58% of teens who had sex by age 14
- 22% of teens say they were pressured to do things they did not want to do, compared to 45% of teens who had sex by age 14.
- 24% of teens in a relationship said their boyfriends/girlfriends called them stupid, worthless, and ugly compared to 45% of teens who had sex by age 14.
- Nearly half of teen girls who have been in a relationship (48%) say they have been victims of verbal, physical, or sexual abuse by their boyfriends.
 - Among all teens who had sex by age 14, 69% report having gone through one or more types of abuse in a relationship.

Today's tween relationship behavior may foreshadow a new wave of abuse among teens in the future

- These tweens already exhibit signs of abuse.
- They already exhibit sexual behavior. Early sexual behavior appears to lead to dating violence and abuse in larger numbers.
- Without some form of intervention, this disturbing trend is likely to continue.

Parents think they know what's up, but many don't have any idea

- More than three times as many tweens (20%) as parents (6%) admit that parents know little or nothing about the tweens' dating relationships.
 - Twice as many tweens report having "hooked up" with a partner (17%) as parents reported of their own 11-14 year old child (8%).
 - Fewer parents also identified their tween as having been in a relationship (38% vs. 47% who self-reported experience in a boyfriend/girlfriend relationship).
- Nearly twice as many tweens (21%) as parents (11%) know someone between the ages of 11-14 who has had sex.
- Parents are largely unaware of the abuse levels present among tweens.
 - Only 12% of parents (compared with 23% of tweens) know someone their son's/daughter's age who has had a boyfriend/girlfriend threaten to spread rumors about them if he/she didn't do what the other person wanted.
 - One in four parents (24% - compared with 40% of all tweens) know someone their son's/daughter's age who has been called names or put down by a boyfriend/girlfriend.
 - Only 22% of parents (compared with 36% of all tweens) know someone their son's/daughter's age who has been verbally abused (called stupid, worthless, ugly, etc.) by a boyfriend/girlfriend.
 - Nearly twice as many tweens as parents know someone between the ages of 11-14 who has been threatened (6% parents vs. 11% tweens), pressured to have oral sex against their will (4% parents vs. 8% tweens), or pressured to have sex (go all the way) against their will (5% parents, 9% tweens).
- Abuse via tech-devices is much more prevalent than most parents realize.
 - Nearly twice as many tweens as parents know someone between the ages of 11-14 who has been checked up on by calling their cell phone more than 10 times per day (15% parents vs. 28% tweens) or texting them more than 20 times per day (13% parents vs. 24% tweens).
 - More than twice as many tweens as parents know someone between the ages of 11-14 who has had a boyfriend/girlfriend share private/embarrassing pictures of them (4% parents vs. 9% tweens), share private/embarrassing video of them (2% parents vs. 7% tweens), or made them afraid not to respond to a cell phone call, email, IM, text, etc. (3% parents vs. 8% tweens).

Read the full report: [Tween/Teen Dating Relationships Survey 2008](#)

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