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## Survey Says Date Violence Affects Half of Young

*Texas group release figures as part of an effort to fight the practice*

By Polly Ross Hughes

AUSTIN – More than 27 percent of young Texans report being victims of physical violence while dating, according to a survey conducted by the Texas Council on Family Violence.

And, nearly 20 percent reported being victims of sexual violence while 41 percent said they've experienced verbal abuse.

The council and Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott released highlights from the survey Monday as part of a \$2 million, three-year campaign to combat domestic and dating violence.

“Dating violence is a pervasive problem that affects young Texans of all ethnic and educational backgrounds,” Abbott said in a prepared statement announcing the survey results.

Abbott added that it is “imperative” for the state to prevent abusive dating and offer help and solutions for teens and young adults in “unhealthy or dangerous situations.”

The survey is based on March telephone interviews with 918 respondents who are unmarried and between the ages of 16 and 24.

It defines dating violence as including sexual, physical, emotional or verbal abuse.

By that definition, half of the young adults said they've experienced dating violence either as the victim or the abuser, the study shows.

“That was pretty surprising for us to find out,” said Jitin Hingorani, spokesman for the council. “It's more prevalent than we thought it was in the state.”

Seventy-five percent of young Texans reported either personally experiencing dating violence or knowing someone who had.

“It's just as prevalent as domestic violence, which is shocking,” Hingorani said.

The Texas Council on Family Violence conducted four focus groups with young Texans to learn how best to reach them with an awareness and prevention campaign.

“A lot of people in this age group in the focus groups did not think it was violence until it became physical,” Hingorani said. “They’re just not calling it dating violence. They’re not recognizing it as that. They don’t consider emotional or verbal abuse as violence.”

After focus groups suggested one of the best ways to reach their peers is through the Internet, the council took its “Red Flags” campaign to [myspace.com/knowtheredflags](http://myspace.com/knowtheredflags).

Hingorani said both men and women can fall victim to a partner’s attempt to gain power and control by degrading them.

“We did find in this age group, much more so than in domestic violence, that women can also be abusive, jealous, dominating, keeping track of the time that boyfriends are spending away from them,” he said. “It kind of works both ways.”

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