



"Horrors" Found In Tween, Teen Dating

July 8, 2008

(CBS) Tweens and teens in dating relationships are experiencing significant levels of various forms of abuse, many don't know the warning signs of an abusive relationship, and many parents don't know what's going on in those relationships, a new survey says.

Among the findings:

- 69 percent of all teens who had sex by age 14 said they have gone through one or more types of abuse in a relationship.
- 40 percent of the youngest tweens, those between the ages of 11 and 12, report that their friends are victims of verbal abuse in relationships, and nearly one-in-ten (9 percent) say their friends have had sex.
- Nearly three-in-four tweens (72 percent) say boyfriend/girlfriend relationships usually begin at age 14 or younger.
- More than one-in-three 11-12 year olds (37percent) say they have been in a boyfriend/girlfriend relationship.
- One-in-five between the ages of 13 and 14 say their friends are victims of dating violence, such as getting struck, hit or slapped by a boyfriend or girlfriend, and nearly half of all tweens in relationships say they know friends who are verbally abused.
- One-in-five 13-14 year olds in relationships (20 percent) say they know friends and peers who've been struck in anger (kicked, hit, slapped, or punched) by a boyfriend or girlfriend.
- Only half of all tweens (51 percent) claim to know the warning signs of a bad/hurtful relationship.

In addition, significant numbers of teens (15-18) are experiencing emotional and mental abuse as well as violence when dating; it's even more prevalent among teens who've had sex by 14.

And many teens and tweens say they've been victims of technological abuse, in which cell phones, paging, IMs, social networking sites, etc. were used to carry out the abuse.

The survey, which was commissioned by Liz Claiborne Inc. and loveisrespect.org, was conducted by Teenage Research Unlimited. Loveisrespect.org operates the National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline.

"We were surprised at how many tweens or kids ages 11 and 12 are dealing with these issues," Liz Claiborne Vice President Jane Randel told **Early Show** national correspondent **Tracy Smith**.

What's behind it all? Researchers believe early sexual activity tends to fuel dating violence among teens and tweens, Smith reports.

And Randel points out that, "Parents, while they think they know what their teens or, more importantly, tweens relationships are, they're really not fully aware of what's going on. And that's scary."

Experts say programs are needed to help parents and their kids recognize unhealthy relationships, and to stop them before they start.

Concerned by the trend toward abusive tween and teen dating, the National Association of Attorneys General passed a resolution urging states to establish educational programs on teen dating violence and abuse.

The move was spearheaded by Patrick Lynch, Rhode Island's attorney general, who told co-anchor **Russ Mitchell** on **The Early Show** Tuesday that the numbers in the survey are "absolutely alarming."

He said young people need to be made aware of "these horrors" so the "violence not only doesn't occur at that level, but isn't perpetuated in generations to come."

MMVIII, CBS Interactive Inc. All Rights Reserved.

[Feedback](#) [Terms of Service](#) [Privacy Statement](#)