

# Teen dating violence

## Overview

Teen dating violence (TDV) is a pattern of abusive behaviors—including physical, emotional, and sexual abuse—occurring within adolescent romantic relationships, with detrimental effects on victims' physical and mental well-being. Despite the high prevalence of TDV, the limited understanding of intimate partner violence in adolescent contexts hinders the development of comprehensive measures to support and protect teenagers (Abrams, 2023).

TDV can have profound and long-lasting negative consequences, including physical injury, mental health issues, and engagement in high-risk behaviors, such as drug and alcohol use. Furthermore, adolescents who experience TDV face an elevated susceptibility to intimate partner violence (IPV) in adulthood, amplifying the urgency for awareness, prevention, and intervention measures tailored to the unique dynamics of teenage relationships (Piolanti et al, 2023).

19%

of teens in the U.S. experience **sexual or physical** dating violence.

50%

of teens in the U.S. face **stalking or harassment** during their relationships.

65%

of teens in the U.S. report being **psychologically** abused.

Source: U.S. Department of Justice

## Risk factors:



### Gender

Studies show that girls are at higher risk than boys of being physically injured from dating violence (Hamby, Finkelhor, and Turner, 2012). However, there is not always a clear dichotomy between victim and perpetrator. **All genders can perpetrate and experience dating violence** (Reppucci et al., 2013).



### Sexual orientation

One study examined the prevalence of physical and sexual TDV victimization of lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) youth compared with heterosexual youth. They found that **LGB youths experience teen dating violence at higher rates than heterosexual youths** (Olsen, Vivolo-Kantor, and Kahn, 2020).



### Mental illness

**Depressive symptoms, suicidal behavior, and low self-esteem in particular are strongly correlated with risk for TDV**, especially in women (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention).



### Race and Ethnicity

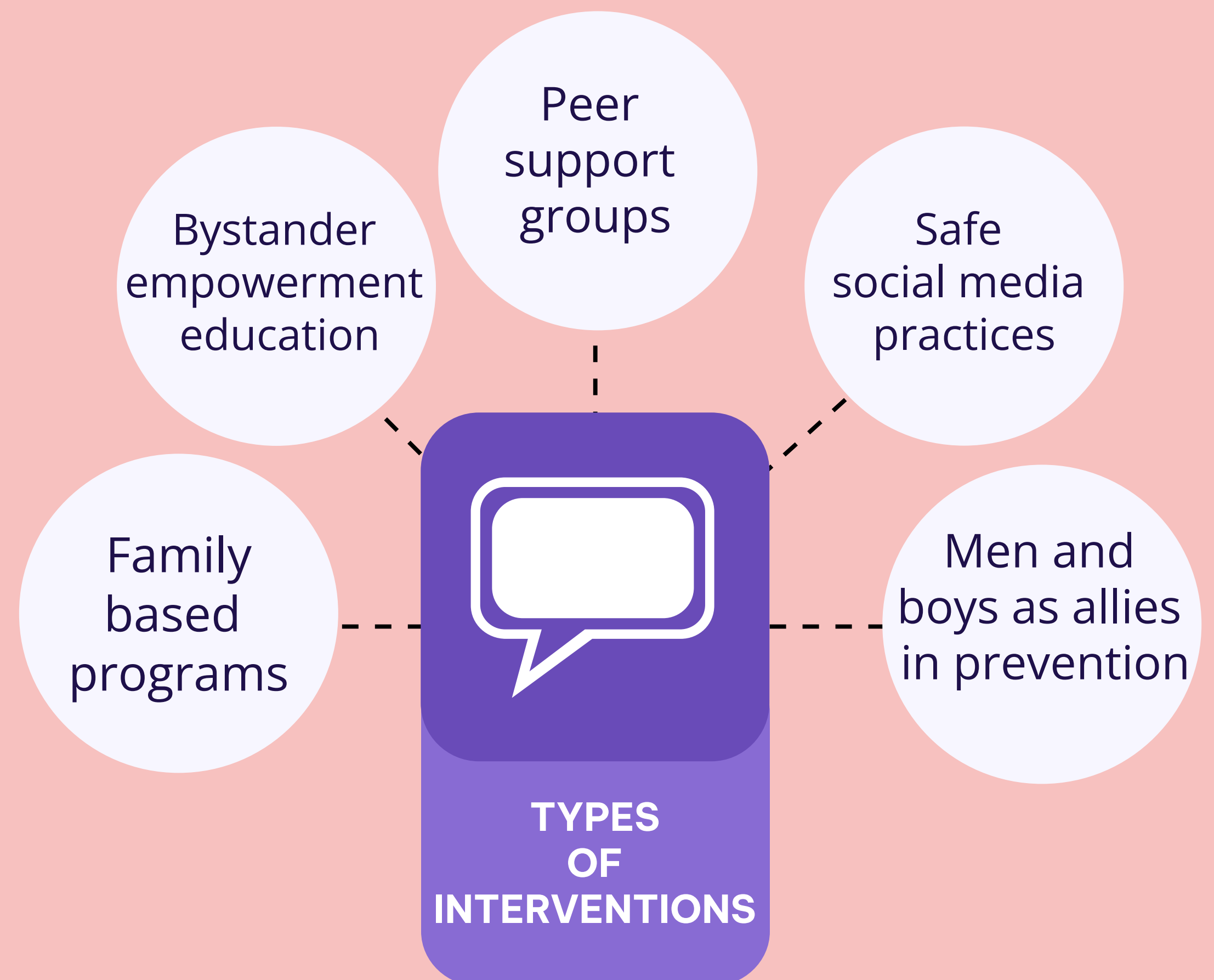
A study found that **Black and Hispanic youths were more likely to be involved in and/or experience anxiety from physical and psychological dating violence**, compared with white youths (Choi, Weston, and Temple, 2017).



### Culture

Cultural norms that prioritize family honor and reputation often discourage victims from seeking help, fearing social stigma. For example, **discussing dating openly is considered taboo in South Asian and Arab contexts**, leading to the **underreporting of TDV cases**.

## Resources:



The Center for Disease Control has developed **resources to help communities focus their prevention efforts** on what works to address risk and protective factors for violence:

### COMPREHENSIVE YOUTH PREVENTION MODEL

The *Dating Matters* program for youth includes interactive lessons on understanding feelings, healthy communication, unhealthy and unsafe relationships, etc. It also includes programs for parents, educators, and older youth to build protective environments and change social norms. Research shows that *Dating Matters* can reduce the risk for dating violence exposure in middle school.

### EVIDENCE-BASED RESOURCE FOR ACTION

The 62-page *Intimate Partner Violence Prevention Resource* describes strategies and approaches based on the best available evidence for preventing intimate partner violence, including teen dating violence. In addition to the above interventions, it includes multiple strategies that can be used in combination to prevent intimate partner violence and teen dating violence.

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Abrams, Z. (2023, October). *Up to 19% of teens experience dating violence. psychologists want to break the cycle.* Monitor on Psychology. <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2023/10/disrupting-teen-dating-violence#:~:text=In%20the%20United%20States%2C%20up,Department%20of%20Justice%2C%202022>).

- **This article published by the American Psychological Association provides key statistics on TDV across the United States. It also includes evidence-based intervention and prevention strategies to protect youth.**

Piolanti, A., Waller, F., Schmid, I. E., & Foran, H. M. (2023, May 2). *Long-term adverse outcomes associated with teen dating violence: A systematic review.* American Academy of Pediatrics.

<https://publications.aap.org/pediatrics/article/151/6/e2022059654/191229/Long-term-Adverse-Outcomes-Associated-With-Teen?autologincheck=redirected>

- **Findings from this longitudinal study showed that TDV in adolescence was associated with future teen dating and intimate partner violence in adulthood. Studies also indicated that TDV was longitudinally associated with increasing high-risk behaviors (ie, marijuana and alcohol use) and poor mental health outcomes (particularly for victimization). Significant associations between TDV and negative outcomes were reported more frequently among females compared with males.**

*Literature review: Teen dating violence.* Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. (n.d.).

<https://ojjdp.ojp.gov/model-programs-guide/literature-reviews/Teen-Dating-Violence#03796e>

- **This literature review from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention provides a comprehensive overview of key statistics related to TDV as well as risk factors such as gender, sexual orientation, mental illness, race, and ethnicity. This website also includes information on the consequences of TDV, as well as the effectiveness of various programs to prevent or reduce TDV and other related outcomes. Sources for studies referenced in the fact sheet are available for download here.**

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (n.d.). *Dating matters® toolkit.* Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://vetoviolence.cdc.gov/apps/dating-matters-toolkit/>

- **Dating Matters®: Strategies to Promote Healthy Teen Relationships is a comprehensive prevention model that teaches 11-14-year-olds how to have healthy, safe relationships both now and in the future. Programs for youth include interactive lessons on understanding feelings, healthy communication, unhealthy and unsafe relationships, and other topics. Dating Matters also includes programs for parents, educators, and older youth to help build protective environments and change social norms. Research shows that Dating Matters can reduce the risk for dating violence exposure in middle school, along with other forms of violence and risk behaviors.**

Intimate partner violence prevention resource for action. (n.d.). [https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/ipv-prevention-resource\\_508.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/ipv-prevention-resource_508.pdf)

- **Intimate Partner Violence Prevention Resource for Action [5 MB, 62 Pages] describes strategies and approaches based on the best available evidence for preventing intimate partner violence, including teen dating violence. It includes multiple strategies that can be used in combination to prevent intimate partner violence and teen dating violence.**

*Resources for victims of teen dating violence.* Resources for Victims of Teen Dating Violence | Youth.gov. (n.d.).

<https://youth.gov/youth-topics/teen-dating-violence/resources>

- **Victims of teen dating violence often keep the abuse a secret. They should be encouraged to reach out to trusted adults like parents, teachers, school counselors, youth advisors, or health care providers. They can also seek confidential counsel and advice from professionally trained adults and peers. This website provides several resources for teens experiencing TDV to access help.**

National Sexual Violence Resource Center. (n.d.-b). *Bystander intervention tips and strategies.*

[https://www.nsvrc.org/sites/default/files/2018-02/publications\\_nsvrc\\_tip-sheet\\_bystander-intervention-tips-and-strategies\\_1.pdf](https://www.nsvrc.org/sites/default/files/2018-02/publications_nsvrc_tip-sheet_bystander-intervention-tips-and-strategies_1.pdf)

- **This three-page tip sheet from the National Sexual Violence Resource Center provides several strategies for bystanders to engage in effective sexual violence intervention and prevention.**

