

A Report from the New York City Alliance Against Sexual Assault

Research Summary

June • 2008



Partners and Peers: Sexual and Dating Violence Among NYC Youth

Sexual and dating violence is not only a crime that disproportionately affects adolescents and young adults, it is a significant public health problem in New York City. Research has demonstrated that both male and female victims of sexual and dating violence are at greater risk for developing an array of health risk behaviors and adverse life outcomes, affecting psychological, social, and physical well-being.

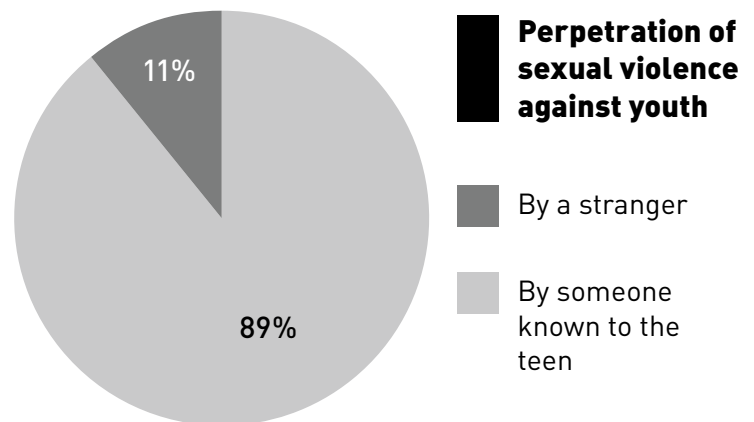
► *The main finding is that sexual violence is prevalent among youth in New York City.*

This summary report highlights sexual and dating violence-related experiences among youth and how these experiences impact young people's lives and health. It identifies youth at high risk for sexual and dating

violence perpetration and victimization. Recommendations on how to appropriately respond and prevent sexual and dating violence are featured on our last page.

Youth experience sexual violence from people they know

- In this study, 16.2% or more than 1 in 6 students surveyed reported experiencing sexual violence at some point in their lives.
- Of these youth, 10.1% reported experiencing non-partner sexual violence (sexual abuse or forced sex), and 14.1% reported experiencing sexual violence from a dating partner.
- 89% of youth who had experienced sexual violence said it was committed against them by someone they knew.
- Of youth who had experienced sexual violence, nearly 1 in 5 reported experiencing *both* partner and non-partner sexual violence.

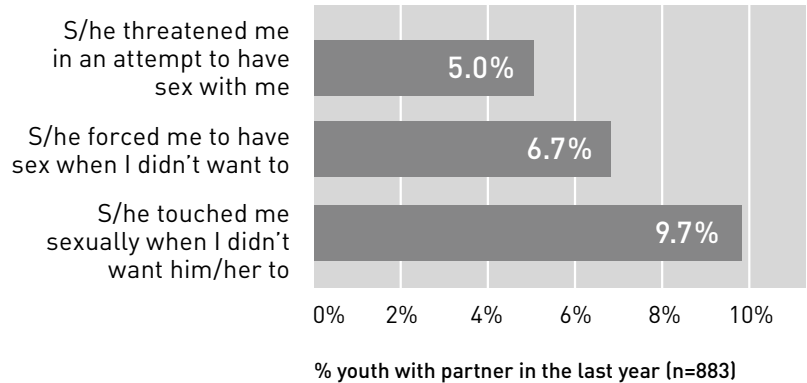


This study was carried out in 2006-2007 by the New York City Alliance Against Sexual Assault (the Alliance) and the Columbia University Center for Youth Violence Prevention (CCYVP) at the Mailman School of Public Health with funding from the New York City Council and the Centers for Disease Control. The study included surveying 1,312 youth in four public high schools in New York City on the topics of sexual and dating violence. For a detailed description of the methodology, please visit: http://www.nycagainstrape.org/research_measuring_1.html.

Dating violence includes both physical and sexual violence

- Of youth who report dating violence victimization, 1 in 6 experience only sexual violence.
- Among those reporting physical dating violence, more than one quarter (27.4%) reported ever being pushed or shoved by a dating partner and 17% reported ever being slapped or hit.
- Among those reporting sexual dating violence, 9.7% reported their partner touched them sexually when they didn't want to be touched and 6.7% said they were forced to have sex against their will.

During a conflict or argument with my partner in the last year:

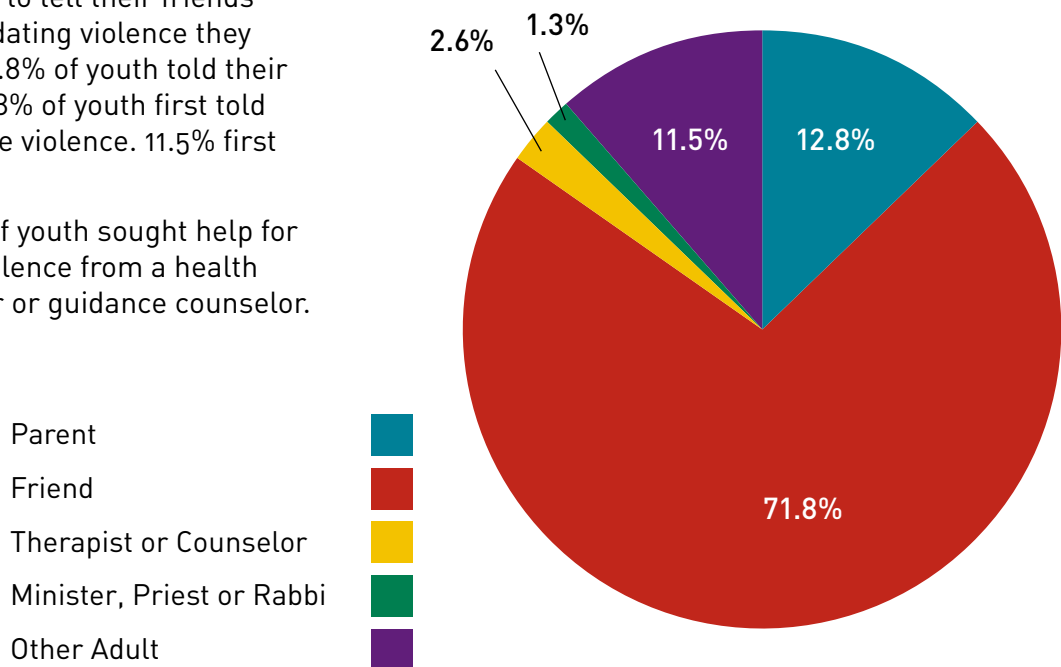


The relationship between non-partner sexual violence and physical dating violence: One risk factor for experiencing physical dating violence for both boys and girls is having a history of non-partner sexual violence. Girls with a history of non-partner sexual violence were 2.75 times more likely to be victims of physical dating violence than girls without a history of non-partner sexual violence. Similarly, males with a history of non-partner sexual abuse were 3.55 times more likely to be victims in a physically abusive dating relationship than males who do not have a history of non-partner sexual violence.

Youth tell their friends first, if they tell anyone at all about the violence

- Over half (58.7%) of the youth surveyed told someone about their experiences with sexual or dating violence.
- Youth are most likely to tell their friends about any sexual or dating violence they have experienced. 71.8% of youth told their friends *first*. Only 12.8% of youth first told their parent about the violence. 11.5% first told another adult.
- Overall, only 24.4% of youth sought help for sexual and dating violence from a health professional, teacher or guidance counselor.

Person youth first tell about their experiences with dating violence

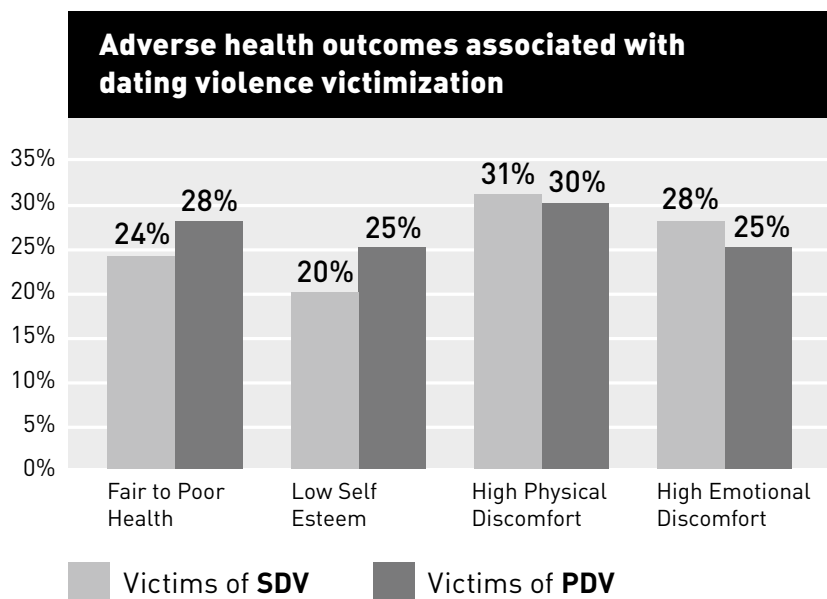


Youth experience adverse health outcomes as a result of physical and sexual dating violence

- Both victimization and perpetration of physical and sexual dating violence is linked with adverse health outcomes for youth.
- Victims of sexual dating violence report recent and frequent pain and illness that results in high physical discomfort (31%) and high emotional discomfort (28%).
- Victims of physical dating violence also report fair to poor health (28%) and low self-esteem (25%).

SDV: Sexual Dating Violence

PDV: Physical Dating Violence



Perpetrating other forms of violence is a risk factor for dating violence perpetration

- 28% of youth who report perpetrating sexual violence against their dating partner also reported carrying a weapon in the past month.
- 60% of youth who are physically violent with their dating partners also report engaging in physical fights in the last year.
- Nearly 1 in 5 (22%) youth who report perpetrating sexual violence against a dating partner also report being a member of a gang.

Dating violence perpetration and other violence reported by youth in NYC

	Perpetrators of Physical Dating Violence	Perpetrators of Sexual Dating Violence	Students in Non-Violent Relationships
Missing school due to fear of violence in the last 30 days	14%	17%	8%
Carrying a weapon in the last 30 days	16%	28%	13%
Being threatened or injured with a weapon in the last 12 months	20%	24%	14%
Participating in a fight in the last 12 months	60%	59%	44%
Gang membership in the last 12 months	13%	22%	14%

Sexual dating violence perpetration and gang membership: Boys who report being a member of a gang within the last year are 2 times more likely to report perpetrating sexual dating violence than boys who are not a member of a gang. Overall, 22% of youth who perpetrate sexual dating violence also report being a member of a gang. For boys this number is higher with 1 in every 3 (34%) sexually violent boys being a member of a gang in the last year compared to only 14% of students in a non-violent relationship.

► Recommendations:

The high prevalence of sexual and dating violence amongst youth requires a comprehensive prevention and response intervention

Schools and programs that work with youth should include a focus on primary prevention

Primary prevention focuses on examining and addressing the root causes of violence such that we can end violence *before* it ever occurs. No one single program will end sexual and dating violence. We believe in utilizing a spectrum or continuum of activities that address multiple levels. To learn more about our prevention framework, please visit: www.nycagainstrape.org.

Teens should have access to youth-friendly referral information

Given that teens disclose incidents of sexual and dating violence to friends first, providing them with referral information is key to helping them support each other. One such resource that the Alliance developed is the NYC Teen Health Map: a subway map on one side and a service guide for youth on the other, which folds into a discreet card to be tucked into a wallet. To find out more information at the NYC Teen Health Map, visit: www.nycagainstrape.org/research_communications_1.html

Professionals should be trained on how to properly handle disclosures and refer youth to services

Since many youth who have experienced sexual and dating violence tell someone about that violence, it is imperative that all those who work with youth are trained in how to properly handle disclosures and how to refer youth to services. Proper responses to disclosures of sexual and dating violence require that sensitivity and respect be given to the survivor. This training should be inclusive of several audiences: youth workers including after school program staff; school staff including teachers, guidance counselors, nurses, security guards, and janitors among others; and health professionals.



**New York City Alliance
Against Sexual Assault**

NYC Alliance Against Sexual Assault
27 Christopher Street
3rd Floor
New York, NY 10014
212.229.0345 phone
212.229.0676 fax
research@nycagainstrape.org
www.nycagainstrape.org

Copyright 2008 New York City Alliance Against Sexual Assault

Suggested citation: Fry D, Lessel H, O'Connor M. Sexual and Dating Violence Among NYC Youth: Research Summary. New York City Alliance Against Sexual Assault: New York.

For an electronic version of this research summary, please visit www.nycagainstrape.org