

Prevalence of Teen Dating Violence in the United States and Georgia

Teen dating violence negatively affects the wellbeing and opportunities for healthy development for both perpetrators and victims.¹ Research reveals that adolescent girls experience dating violence at a rate higher than any other type of violence impacting youth, with one in three girls reporting physical, emotional or verbal abuse from a dating partner.² **Overall, 1.5 million and one in ten high school students report experiencing physical abuse from a dating partner.**³ Experiencing violence as a teen increases the occurrence of substance use, eating disorders, suicide attempts, risky sexual behavior and an increase in the severity of violence in future intimate partner relationships.⁴ Each of these factors is a potential indicator of future vulnerability to lethal domestic violence. Violence during adolescence cannot be ignored or normalized; it must be addressed to prevent continuation and the development of potential lethal consequences.

The prevalence of teen dating violence in Georgia is difficult to track and is an identified area of growth for the field of family violence research. Due to the way that abuse within intimate partner relationships are covered under state law, most teen relationships are excluded from being categorized as family violence crimes (those which include individuals that previously or currently live together, have a child together, or have been married).⁵ Given this, the most accurate way to identify the prevalence of teen dating violence in Georgia is through the services specifically targeting teens experiencing dating violence.

The National Domestic Violence Hotline for teens, *love is respect*, provides crisis intervention, safety planning dating abuse and healthy relationship education, referrals and resources to teens. According to their data, Georgia ranks 8th in the nation for hotline contact volume. The types of abuse most commonly reported were emotional and

verbal (95%), followed by physical abuse (49%). The most requested resource was individual professional counseling (57%) followed by domestic violence support groups (34%).⁶ Similarly, *Breaking Silence* Teen Textline which provides confidential support and resources to teens in Georgia, reported emotional (41%) and physical abuse (40%) as the most common types of abuse disclosed.⁷

The volume of teens experiencing dating violence is high, however, **The National Network to End Domestic Violence found that only 24% of identified domestic violence programs in Georgia provided support or advocacy to teen and young adult victims of dating abuse.**⁸ Given the overall prevalence of teen dating violence revealed in national research, it would appear that there are many more teens experiencing dating violence than are seeking help. This can be due to many factors including but not limited to: accessibility of resources, lack of parental awareness of violence, lack of healthy relationship knowledge or modeling, embarrassment, and fear for personal safety.

Teen Dating Violence Fatalities

While teen dating violence fatalities are relatively rare compared to adult domestic violence-related fatalities,⁹ the connection between experiencing or perpetrating violence during adolescent years and the risk of lethal violence in adult years is well established in research. A national study published in 2019 examined intimate partner homicide of adolescents and found that 7% of adolescent homicides were perpetrated by an intimate partner, 80% of the fatalities were female victims and the majority were killed by a firearm.¹⁰ Further, the study reveals that indicators of lethality in abusive adult relationships are also prevalent for teens and include a change in relationship status, jealousy, pregnancy and the presence of a firearm. These patterns mirror adult domestic violence-related fatality trends. Teen dating violence intervention and prevention is adult domestic violence homicide and suicide prevention.

From 2018-2021, the Georgia Commission on Family Violence (GCFV) Fatality Review Project verified 695 known domestic violence-related fatalities. In 3% (20) of these incidents the victim, perpetrator or both the victim and perpetrator, were minors in an intimate relationship.¹¹ **The majority of the fatalities were female victims (80%) and involved a firearm (70%) as the cause of death.** There were 2 male perpetrators who died by suicide following the attempted or completed homicide of their partner. Suicide due to intimate partner violence remains a challenge to accurately track. However, 17% of all suicides in 13-18 year olds were determined to have intimate partner problems as a contributing factor from 2016-2020.¹² The majority of intimate partner problem-related suicides were committed by 16 and 17 year olds with a firearm, at home. **Further, white male teens died due to an intimate partner problem-related suicide at more than four times the rate of any other gender or race.**¹² Overall, suicide intervention with adolescents appears to be an important component of teen dating violence fatality prevention.

Areas for Growth in Georgia

There is a disconnect between what is known nationally and what is known in Georgia regarding the extent of teen dating violence. A more comprehensive understanding of the scope of the issue would make resource development and distribution more reliable statewide. **There is a need for increased availability of education about healthy relationships, safety and communication for teens and parents.**⁷ The *love is respect* national textline reported that in Georgia, teens requested individual counseling and domestic violence support groups at rates much higher than any other service.⁶ However, of the 45 domestic violence programs in Georgia that participated in the 2022 National Network to End Domestic Violence survey⁸, only 24% reported providing support or advocacy for teens. This shortfall may not represent a lack of desire on the part of programs to meet the needs of teen victims, but rather a dire need to increase

funding and capacity for programs to develop and provide teen-specific resources.

Georgia has experienced a 57% increase in domestic violence-related fatalities since 2012.¹¹ Intervening with individuals at higher risk for fatal abuse at earlier ages is imperative. Providing education, awareness and resources tailored to adolescent needs is an important step to reducing the likelihood that young victims of abuse will kill or be killed, in their teens or later in life, by a current or former intimate partner. In nearly 50% of all fatal cases of abuse reviewed by GCFV's Fatality Review Project from 2004-2018, the relationship started during adolescence.¹³ **The connection between experiencing intimate partner violence in adolescence and increased vulnerability to perpetrating or being victimized in adulthood is clear.**¹⁴ Improved prevention, intervention and response to violence witnessed, experienced or perpetrated during adolescence will result in a reduction in non-lethal and lethal adult family violence incidents.

Resources



Breaking Silence
Project Date Initiative

For more about Project Date, visit www.project-date.org

DATING SHOULDN'T HURT

Dating violence can include physical, mental, emotional, and sexual abuse. If you or someone you know may be in an abusive relationship, Breaking Silence can help.

TEXT 706.765.8019

ABOUT US
Breaking Silence is a free and anonymous hotline open 24/7. Text us to receive support for the questions you have about your relationship. We are here to help everyone understand what makes a relationship healthy, respectful, or abusive.

CONTACT US
Email: team@breaking Silence@gmail.com
Facebook: [facebook.com/breakingsilence](https://www.facebook.com/breakingsilence)
Instagram: [instagram.com/breakingsilence](https://www.instagram.com/breakingsilence)
Twitter: twitter.com/breakingsilence

GEORGIA DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOTLINE
1-800-33-HAVEN
1-800-334-2836

GEORGIA CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES HOTLINE
1-855-GACHILD
1-855-422-4453

LBR
let's be real

Be Real With Us
Facebook: [letsberealbr](https://www.facebook.com/letsbereallbr)
Twitter, Snapchat, Spotify: [breakthecycle/](https://www.instagram.com/breakthecycle/)
Instagram: [breakthecycle](https://www.instagram.com/breakthecycle/)
Web: letsbereal.org

Love Shouldn't Hurt.

VISIT PADV.ORG FOR INFORMATION AND RESOURCES ON TEEN DATING VIOLENCE

love is respect.org

peer advocates are available to chat at www.loveisrespect.org

text "loveis" to 22522

call 1.800.331.3474
(1.866.331.6453 TTY)

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Agency Information

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