



**Teen dating violence
among Latin@ youth:
Rates, risks, and
protective factors**

Teen dating violence among Latin@ youth: Rates, risks, and protective factors

Contents

Physical and sexual TDV	2
Psychological and digital dating violence	3
TDV help-seeking behaviors and barriers	3
Risk factors for TDV	3
Protective factors that reduce the risk for TDV	4
TDV resources	5

Teen dating violence (TDV) refers to violence that occurs between partners in a dating, romantic, or close relationship. TDV can occur in person or electronically (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2021). This factsheet summarizes recent rates of TDV among Latin@ youth and culturally specific factors to support TDV prevention. Although more research is needed with diverse Latin@ populations, existing studies suggest that more than half of Latin@ youth experience psychological and/or digital dating violence, and that LGBTQ Latin@ youth are at increased risk for TDV. Risk factors for dating violence among Latin@ youth include past experiences of abuse and traditional gender role attitudes. Research suggests Latin@ community strengths, such as family connectedness and strong Latin@ cultural ties, are protective factors that can support TDV prevention.

Physical and sexual TDV

The TDV rates below are based on a national sample of 88,219 high school youth participating in the Center for Disease Control's Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey between 2013 and 2017 (Fix et al., 2021). The YRBSS is conducted every two years and tracks the prevalence of health behaviors in a representative sample of youth in the United States, providing a basis for comparing rates in different subpopulations.

- 10% of Latin@ youth had experienced physical dating violence (e.g., hitting, kicking, or throwing items at a partner) and 11% had experienced sexual dating violence (e.g., rape, sexual coercion, sexual harassment) in the past year.
- Among Latina heterosexual girls, 9% had experienced physical dating violence and 11% experienced sexual dating violence in the past year.
- Among Latino heterosexual boys, 7% had experienced physical dating violence and 6% experienced sexual dating violence in the past year.
- Among Latino gay, bisexual, queer (GBQ) youth, 26% experienced physical dating violence and 26% experienced sexual dating violence in the past year.
- Among Latina lesbian, bisexual, queer (LBQ) youth, 19% experienced physical dating violence and 21% experienced sexual dating violence in the past year.



Rates may be higher among Latin@ youth that are actively dating. Though research with Latin@ youth continues to be limited, in a school-based sample of 70 dating Latin@ youth, 40% reported experiencing physical abuse and 28.6% reported experiencing sexual abuse.

Psychological and digital dating violence

- Prevalence rates for psychological dating abuse among Latin@ youth range from 38% to 59.4% (McNaughton Reyes et al., 2016; Reed et al., 2021).
- In one study, more than half (57.1%) of Latin@ high school students reported experiencing digital monitoring or control by a dating partner, including pressure to share online passwords or respond quickly to messages (Reed et al., 2021).
- In the same study, 37% of Latin@ high school students reported experiencing digital sexual abuse such as pressure to “sext” (send sexual photos) or receiving sexual photos they did not ask for (Reed et al., 2021).

TDV help-seeking behaviors and barriers

- A review of ten studies between 2003-2017 revealed that Latin@ youth are more likely to seek help from informal sources of support, such as friends and family, than formal sources of support, such as health professionals or school staff (Padilla-Medina, et al., 2021).
- Mistrust, fear, shame, embarrassment, and negative perceptions of help-seeking are common barriers to seeking help for TDV among Latin@ youth (Bundock et al., 2018; Miller et al., 2010; Ocampo et al., 2007; Padilla-Medina et al., 2021; Rueda et al., 2015).

Risk factors for TDV

Individual level risk factors

- Latin@ youth with past experiences of abuse (including psychological, physical, or non-partner sexual abuse) are more likely to report experiencing dating violence (DuPont-Reyes et al., 2015; Grest et al., 2018).
- Alcohol use was found to be a unique risk factor for Latina girls when compared to Latino boys. Higher frequency of alcohol consumption among Latina girls increased the likelihood of experiencing and using violence in relationships as young adults (Grest et al., 2018).



Cultural norms and family level factors

- In studies of Latin@ youth, increased acculturation¹ to US mainstream culture was a risk factor for physical and sexual TDV (DuPont-Reyes et al., 2015; McNaughton Reyes et al., 2016).
- Latin@ youth view Latina girls as having less freedom to date and explore healthy relationship topics with parents than Latino boys (Haglund et al., 2019).
- Latin@ youth with more traditional gender role attitudes (often referred to as machismo in Latin@ culture) were more likely to experience and use violence in relationships as young adults (Grest, Amaro, & Unger, 2018).
- In a sample of pregnant or parenting Latina youth, unhealthy communication with parents was related to Latina's use of psychological violence with partners (Toews & Yazedjian, 2014).

Protective factors that reduce the risk for TDV

Individual level protective factors

- Good coping skills and higher self-esteem were protective against TDV in a sample of Latin@ youth (Yan et al., 2010).
- Latina youth with greater conflict resolution skills were less likely to experience multiple forms of TDV (Reyes et al., 2017).

Family level protective factors

- Research shows the more that Latin@ youth felt their parents cared about them, the less likely they were to experience physical or sexual TDV in their lifetime (Kast et al., 2016).
- Latin@ youth were less likely to experience TDV when they came from homes with higher levels of parental monitoring and family connectedness (Yan et al., 2010).
- Research has found that youth with a strong, extended family network were less likely to use psychological dating aggression (Cuevas et al., 2021)

Cultural strengths

- Strong Latin@ cultural ties, including living in Spanish-speaking homes, is associated with reduced risk for TDV (DuPont-Reyes et al., 2015; Grest et al., 2018; Ramos et al., 2011).
- Qualitative research with Latin@ youth revealed that boys between the age of 13-18 perceived parenting as emphasizing respect for women and refraining from abuse (Haglund et al., 2019).

¹ Acculturation refers to the "adaptation and preservation of particular cultural norms, practices, and values" that occur as a result from contact with a culture outside one's own. [17]



TDV resources

- **National Teen Dating Helpline** – Call 1-866-331-9474 (Spanish language option available), Text: LOVIS to 22522 or visit <https://www.loveisrespect.org/> to chat live with an advocate. A project of the National Domestic Violence Hotline, love is respect offers 24/7 information, support, and advocacy to young people between the ages of 13 and 26 who have questions or concerns about their romantic relationships.
- **Crisis Text line** – Text “Home” to 741 741. Crisis Text Line provides free, 24/7, high-quality text-based mental health support and crisis intervention by empowering a community of trained volunteers to support people in their moments of need.
- **Trevor Project Hotline for LGBTQ+ Youth** – 1-866-488-7386. The Trevor Project is a leading national organization providing crisis intervention and suicide prevention services to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer & questioning (LGBTQ) young people under 25.

References

- Bundock, K., Chan, C., & Hewitt, O. (2018). Adolescents' help-seeking behavior and intentions following adolescent dating violence: A systematic review. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 21(2), 350–366. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1524838018770412>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2021). Preventing Teen Dating Violence Fact Sheet. <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/intimatepartnerviolence/teendatingviolence/fastfact.html>
- Cuevas, C. A., Sabina, C., Fahlberg, A., & Espinola, M. (2021). The role of cultural factors on dating aggression and delinquency among Latino youth. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 36(3-4). <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260518755486>
- DuPont-Reyes, M., Fry, D., Rickert, V., & Davidson, L. L. (2014). Adolescent relationship violence and acculturation among NYC Latinos. *Maternal and Child Health Journal*, 19(7), 1543–1552. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10995-014-1659-9>
- Fix, R. L., Nava, N., & Rodriguez, R. (2021). Disparities in adolescent dating violence and associated internalizing and externalizing mental health symptoms by gender, race/ethnicity, and sexual orientation. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260521997944>
- Grest, C. V., Amaro, H., & Unger, J. (2018). Longitudinal predictors of intimate partner violence perpetration and victimization in Latino emerging adults. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 47(3), 560–574. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-017-0663-y>
- Haglund, K., Belknap, R. A., Edwards, L. M., Tassara, M., Hoven, J. V., & Woda, A. (2018). The influence of masculinity on male Latino adolescents' perceptions regarding dating relationships and dating violence. *Violence Against Women*, 25(9), 1039–1052. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801218808395>
- Kast, N. R., Eisenberg, M. E., & Sieving, R. E. (2016). The role of parent communication and connectedness in dating violence victimization among Latino adolescents. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 31(10), 1932–1955. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260515570750>
- McNaughton Reyes, H. L., Foshee, V. A., Kleven, J., Tharp, A. T., Chapman, M. V., Chen, M. S., & Ennett, S. T. (2016). Familial influences on dating violence victimization among Latino youth. *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma*, 25(8), 773–792. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10926771.2016.1210270>
- Miller, E., Decker, M. R., Raj, A., Reed, E., Marable, D., & Silverman, J. G. (2010). Intimate partner violence and health care-seeking patterns among female users of urban adolescent clinics. *Maternal and Child Health Journal*, 14, 910–917. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10995-009-0520-z>
- Ocampo, B. W., Shelley, G. A., & Jaycox, L. H. (2007). Latino teens talk about help seeking and help giving in relation to dating violence. *Violence Against Women*, 13(2), 172–189. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801206296982>
- Padilla-Medina, D. M., Williams, J. R., Ravi, K., Ombayo, B., & Black, B. M. (2021). Teen dating violence help-seeking intentions and behaviors among ethnically and racially diverse youth: A systematic review. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 152483802098556. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1524838020985569>

- Ramos, M. M., Green, D., Booker, J., & Nelson, A. (2011). Immigration status, acculturation, and dating violence risk for Hispanic adolescent girls in New Mexico. *Maternal and Child Health Journal*, 15(7), 1076–1080. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10995-010-0653-0>
- McCullough Cosgrove, J., Sharkey, J. D., & Felix, E. (2020). Exploring Latinx youth experiences of digital dating abuse. *Social Work Research*, 44(3), 157–168. <https://doi.org/10.1093/swr/svaa011>
- Reyes, H. L. M., Foshee, V. A., Chen, M. S., & Ennett, S. T. (2017). Patterns of dating violence victimization and perpetration among Latino youth. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 46(8), 1727–1742. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-016-0621-0>
- Rueda, H. A., Williams, L. R., & Nagoshi, J. L. (2015). Help-seeking and help-offering for teen dating violence among acculturating Mexican American adolescents. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 53, 219–228. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2015.04.001>
- Toews, M. L., & Yazedjian, A. (2014). Psychological and physical dating violence perpetrated by pregnant and parenting Latina adolescents. *Violence and Victims*, 29(5), 872–884. <https://doi.org/10.1891/0886-6708.vv-d-13-00024>
- Yan, F. A., Howard, D. E., Beck, K. H., Shattuck, T., & Hallmark-Kerr, M. (2010). Psychosocial correlates of physical dating violence victimization among Latino early adolescents. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 25(5), 808–831. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260509336958>

Funding for this project was made possible through the Administration on Children, Youth, Families, Family and Youth Services Bureau, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (Grant number: 90EV0431). Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.