

DATING VICTIMIZATION AMONG BC YOUTH

For most youth, dating relationships can have a positive effect on development. However, for some dating can result in experiences of victimization, which can have harmful effects on health and well-being. This fact sheet focuses on experiences of dating victimization among youth in a heterosexual dating relationship who completed the 2013 BC Adolescent Health Survey (BC AHS).

Youth were asked whether they had been hit, slapped, or physically hurt on purpose by a boyfriend or girlfriend in the past year. Youth could respond "yes", "no", or "not in a relationship". The fact sheet contrasts youth who had experienced dating victimization with their peers who did not experience victimization in a dating relationship.

One limitation of this survey is that only experiences of physical dating victimization were examined. Dating victimization can also be sexual, verbal, or emotional in nature. In addition, the BC AHS was not designed specifically as a survey on dating victimization. Thus, it may not have captured all factors associated with dating victimization.

Prevalence of Dating Victimization

In 2013, 5% of youth had experienced dating victimization in the past year, a decrease from 2008. Males had higher rates of dating victimization compared to their female peers (5.5% vs. 4.5%). (Other studies have found that rates of dating victimization were higher among females).

Youth aged 15 years or older were more likely to experience dating victimization (5.8% vs. 3.5% who were 12 to 14 years of age), as were those who lived in rural areas (6.7% vs. 4.8% who lived in urban areas).

Youth at Risk for Dating Victimization

Some youth appeared to be at greater risk of experiencing dating victimization, including youth with a history of abuse. Youth who had been physically abused were 3 times as likely to report dating victimization as those who had not been physically abused (12.6% vs. 3.7%), and youth who had been sexually abused were 5 times as likely to report dating victimization (15.3% vs. 3.6% who had not been sexually abused).

Trend in dating victimization from 2003 to 2013 (among those who reported being in a dating relationship in the past 12 months)



Other youth at greater risk included youth who had run away (12.1% vs. 3.9% who had not run away), youth who had been involved in a physical fight (18.7% vs. 4.4% who had not been in a fight) and youth who were bullied or victimized by peers (6.9% vs. 3.7% who were not bullied).

Dating Victimization and Substance Use

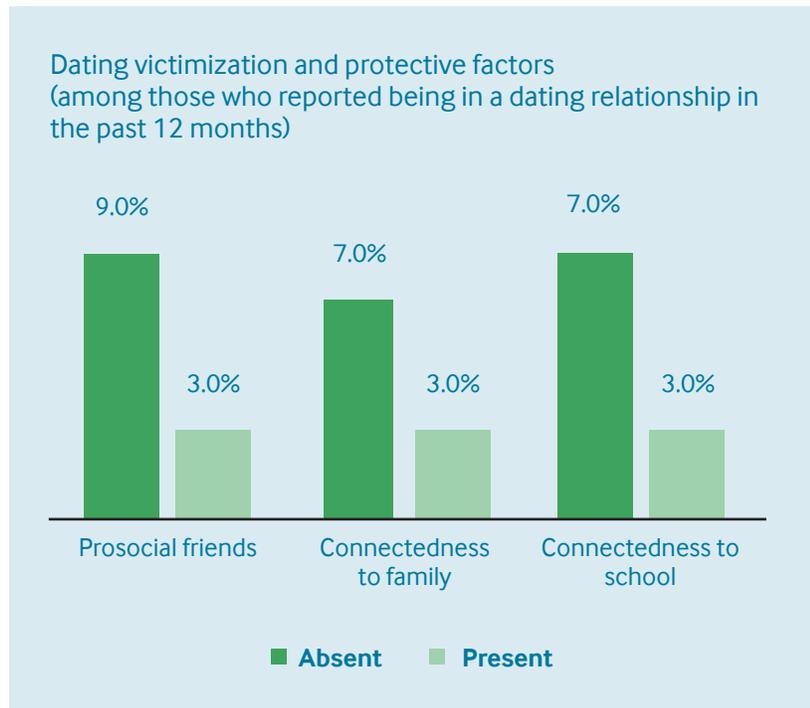
Dating victimization was associated with substance use. For example, youth who had experienced dating victimization were more likely to have smoked cigarettes (35.8% vs. 13.7% who had not been the recipient of dating violence), binge drank (51.2% vs. 26.6%), tried marijuana (67.1% vs. 38.7% and used substances other than alcohol or marijuana (46.1% vs. 19.8% who had not been the recipient of dating violence). In addition, youth who had experienced dating victimization were more likely to report one or more problems because of substance use, such as passing out or problems with the police (58.5% vs. 25.3% who had not experienced dating violence).

Dating Victimization and School

Youth who had experienced dating victimization were more likely to feel unsafe at school (15.3% vs. 5.2% who had not been the recipient of dating violence) and to have skipped class (50.3% vs. 31%). In addition, youth who had experienced dating victimization were more likely to have carried a weapon at school, such as a knife or gun (18.7% vs. 4.9% who had not been the recipient of dating violence).

Protective Factors against Dating Victimization

Some factors decrease the risk of being a recipient of dating violence including having pro-social friends and feeling connected to family or school. For instance, youth who had friends with healthy attitudes to risky behaviours were less likely to report dating victimization than those whose friends did not have such pro-social attitudes (3.3% vs. 9.2%). Among youth who had high levels of family connectedness the rate of dating victimization was 3.1%, compared to 7.4% among youth with low levels of family connectedness. Similarly, 3.4% of youth with high levels of school connectedness reported dating victimization compared to 7.1% with low levels of school connectedness.



Summary

This fact sheet shows that dating victimization has declined over the past decade among youth in BC. However, it remains an important social and public health concern, and some groups of youth are at increased risk for dating victimization. Promoting protective factors in the lives of young people may reduce the likelihood that they will be victimized in dating relationships.

This fact sheet was produced using information gathered from the 2013 BC AHS an 130-item survey completed by 29,832 Grade 7 through 12 students. The sixth BC AHS was conducted in 2018.

The BC AHS is conducted by the McCreary Centre Society, a non-profit organization dedicated to improving the health of BC youth through research, evaluation, and community-based projects that address the unmet health needs of young people.

A fact sheet about the methodology for the survey is available at www.mcs.bc.ca.

This fact sheet was created by SFU Psychology student Catherine Shaffer, with the support of Dr. Jones Adeji, a postdoctoral fellow affiliated with McCreary Centre Society and the University of British Columbia.