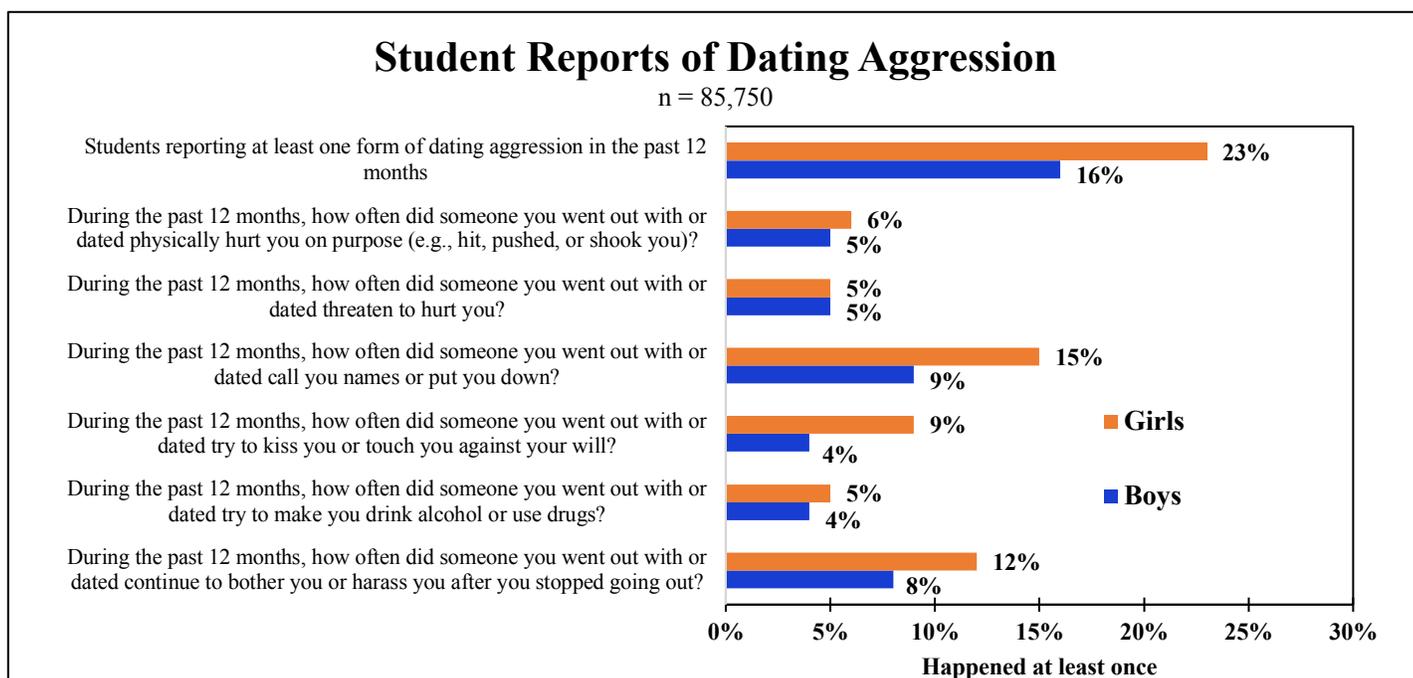


Teen Dating Aggression is a Common Problem in Virginia

Adolescents are a vulnerable population when it comes to aggression in romantic relationships. In 2011, the U.S. Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights issued a Dear Colleague letter reminding schools of their Title IX responsibilities to curb sexual violence among students <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/letters/colleague-201104.pdf>. In 2018, the Virginia General Assembly amended § 22.1-207.1:1 to mandate that Family Life curricula in elementary, middle and high schools incorporate age-appropriate and evidence-based programs on personal privacy and personal boundaries: “Any high school family life education curriculum offered by a local school division shall incorporate age-appropriate elements of effective and evidence-based programs on the prevention of dating violence, domestic abuse, sexual harassment, and sexual violence....”

The Virginia Secondary School Climate Survey provides information directly relevant to both sexual harassment (see Issue 13) and teen dating aggression. The 2018 high school survey found that both male and female students are report substantial levels of dating aggression experiences. The survey was completed by 85,750 students in grades 9 through 12 from 322 public schools, and within this sample 63% of students (29,197 girls and 25,237 boys) indicated that they had dated someone in the past year. Among all 85,750 students who completed the survey, 23% of girls and 16% of boys reported experiencing at least one form of dating aggression, most commonly verbal aggression (15% of girls and 9% of boys). Among those who had dated someone, 35% of girls and 25% of boys reported experiencing at least one form of dating aggression. The survey did not assess the severity of each incident.



Practical Suggestions. Schools should educate students about behaviors that are considered teen dating aggression, how they can obtain help, and ways to support their peers. A U.S. government website informing youth and educators about dating aggression is available: <http://youth.gov/youth-topics/teen-dating-violence>. Some prevention programs include [Shifting Boundaries](#), [Safe Dates](#), and [Dating Matters](#).

Study Overview. The Virginia Secondary School Climate Survey was administered in the spring of 2018 as part of the annual School Safety Audit (§ 22.1-279.8.A) by the Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety (VCSCS) in the Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS), in cooperation with the Virginia Department of Education. This project was supported by grants #NIJ 2014-CK-BX-0004 and #NIJ 2017-CK-BX-007 awarded to the University of Virginia by the National Institute of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, and recommendations expressed in this report are those of the researchers at the Youth Violence Project of the University of Virginia and do not necessarily reflect those of the U.S. Department of Justice or the Center for School and Campus Safety at the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services. More detailed analyses are available from the Virginia Youth Violence Project: <http://youthviolence.edschool.virginia.edu>.