

Dating violence against teens aged 15 to 17 in Canada, 2009 to 2022

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More than 4 in 10 (45%) teens aged 15 to 17 have experienced some form of dating violence, with emotional abuse being most common, according to self-reported data collected in 2018.

The Juristat article released today, titled "[Dating violence against teens aged 15 to 17 in Canada, 2009 to 2022](#)," uses self-reported data from the 2018 Survey of Safety in Public and Private Spaces and police-reported data from the Uniform Crime Reporting Survey to analyze the experiences, characteristics and consequences of teen dating violence. For the purposes of this study, dating violence includes criminal acts such as physical and sexual violence, as well as acts that may not be considered criminal, such as emotional abuse. Because dating violence often goes unreported to police—and because not all abusive behaviours meet the criminal threshold—presenting both self-reported and police-reported data allows for the most complete picture of teen dating violence in Canada.

More than 4 in 10 teens aged 15 to 17 experience dating violence

According to self-reported data, more than 4 in 10 (45%) teens aged 15 to 17 experienced dating violence since they turned 15. Emotional abuse was the most common form of violence (45%), followed by physical violence (10%) and sexual violence (7%).

For acts of emotional abuse, over a third (36%) of teens had experienced a partner acting jealous and limiting their contact with other young men or women. More than 1 in 5 (22%) teens experienced their partner telling them that they were crazy, stupid or not good enough, and a similar proportion (20%) had a partner who demanded to know where they were or who they were with at all times.

When it came to physical and sexual violence by dating partners, 6% of teens indicated that they had been slapped, and 4% had been hit with a fist or object or kicked or bitten. Among teen girls specifically, 7% experienced a partner forcing them to perform sex acts that they did not want to perform, and 5% experienced a partner forcing, or attempting to force, them into having sex.

Rate of police-reported dating violence with teen victims increasing since 2015

Although the majority of teen dating violence is not reported to authorities, police-reported data show that from 2009 to 2022, there were 239 victims of criminal dating violence per 100,000 people aged 15 to 17. Following a period of decline from 2009 to 2014 (-22%), rates of teen dating violence for this age group have increased 33% since 2015, largely because of an increase in reporting of sexual offences. While year-over-year trends in teen dating violence align with police-reported violent crime trends overall for that age group, teen dating violence had less of a decline from 2009 to 2014 (-22%) and more of an increase since 2015 (+33%), compared with rates of violent crime among teen victims overall (-31% from 2009 to 2014; +29% since 2015).

In 2022, the rate of police-reported dating violence was about nine times higher for teenage girls (500 victims per 100,000 population) than boys (57).

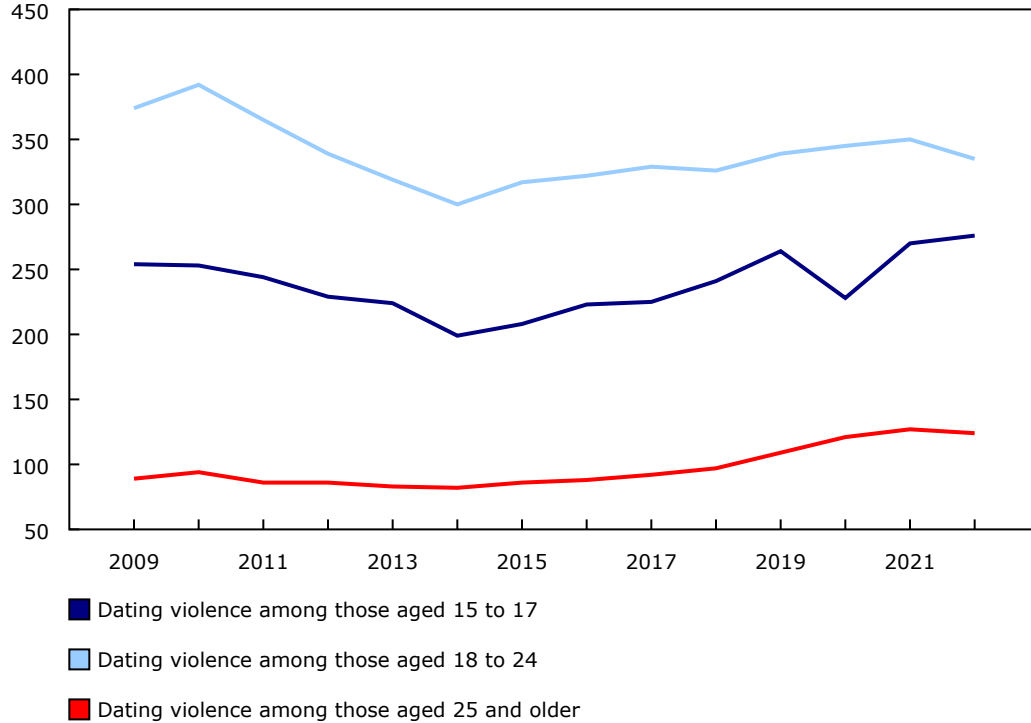
Rate of police-reported sexual violence highest for teen victims aged 15 to 17

Teens aged 15 to 17 who were victimized by a dating partner had higher police-reported rates (60 victims per 100,000 population) of sexual violence than for other violent offences in 2022. The rate of sexual violence in dating relationships among teens of this age was also higher than the rate among those aged 18 to 24 (43), and those aged 25 and older (9). Like physical assault offences, sexual teen dating violence disproportionately impacts girls (a rate of 116 victims per 100,000 population, compared with 5 among boys), as is the case more generally with all forms of sexual violence.



Chart 1
Police-reported violent crime among dating partners, by age group and year, Canada, 2009 to 2022

rate per 100,000 population



Note(s): Rates are calculated on the basis of 100,000 population. Populations are based on July 1 estimates from Statistics Canada, Centre for Demography. Excludes victims where age was coded as unknown and those where age was greater than 110 are excluded from analyses owing to possible instances of miscoding of unknown age within this age category. Excludes a small number of victims in Quebec whose age was unknown but was miscoded as 0. Based on the Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting Survey Trend Database, which, as of 2009, includes data for 99% of the population in Canada. As a result, numbers may not match those presented elsewhere in the report.
Source(s): Uniform Crime Reporting Survey (3302), Trend Database.

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Note to readers

The Survey of Safety in Public and Private Spaces (SSPPS) collected information on Canadians' experiences in public, at work, online and in their intimate partner relationships. The SSPPS sampled the Canadian population aged 15 and older, living in the provinces and territories, excluding those residing in institutions. The sample size for the provinces was 43,296 respondents and the response rate was 43.1%. The sample size for the territories was 2,597 respondents and the response rate was 73.2%. Self-reported teen dating violence includes abuse perpetrated by a current or former intimate partner. Of teen respondents aged 15 to 17 who indicated that they have, or have had, an intimate partner, 99% were single, never married (i.e., their intimate partner was a dating partner).

The Uniform Crime Reporting Survey collects detailed information on criminal incidents that have come to the attention of police services in Canada. Information includes characteristics of incidents, victims, accused persons. Police-reported teen dating violence is defined as any form of violent crime committed against a teen (aged 15 to 17) where the accused person was a current or former non-spousal intimate partner (i.e., boyfriend or girlfriend, ex-boyfriend or ex-girlfriend, and another type of intimate partner such as a one-night stand). In 2022, data from police services covered 99% of the population of Canada. Victim age is calculated based on the end date of an incident, as reported by the police. Some victims experience violence over a period of time—sometimes years—which may be considered by police to be part of one continuous incident. Information about the number and dates of individual incidents for these victims of continuous violence is not available.

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number [3302](#).

The article "[Dating violence against teens aged 15 to 17 in Canada, 2009 to 2022](#)" is now available as part of the publication *Juristat* ([85-002-X](#)).

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; infostats@statcan.gc.ca) or Media Relations (statcan.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.statcan@statcan.gc.ca).