

SEXUAL VIOLENCE AMONG OKLAHOMA PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

YOUTH RISK BEHAVIOR SURVEY 2021

Sexual violence is a serious public health problem affecting Oklahoma high school students. According to the 2021 Youth Risk Behavior Survey, **one in five students (21%)** reported having ever experienced any form of sexual violence, which is defined in the survey as “being forced by anyone to do sexual things, such as kissing, touching, or being physically forced to have sex, that they did not want to do.”



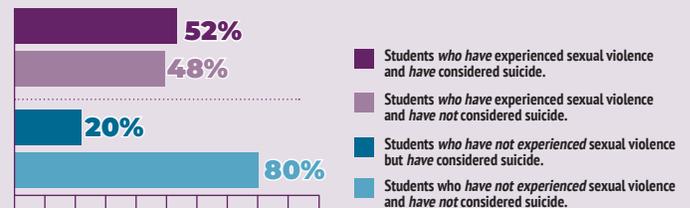
The harm of sexual violence does not stop with that act. Students who experience it are significantly more likely than their non-victimized peers to experience symptoms of depression and be at a higher risk of suicide.

Students who experienced any form of sexual violence were significantly more likely than students who did not experience sexual violence to have symptoms of depression⁴ (66% vs. 38%, $p < .05$).

66% of students who experienced any form of sexual violence had symptoms of depression.

Students who experienced any form of sexual violence were significantly more likely than students who did not experience sexual violence to be at risk for suicide^{4,5} (52% vs. 20%, $p < .05$).

52% of students who experienced any form of sexual violence considered or attempted suicide.



HEALTH EQUITY IS KEY TO PREVENTION



Although anyone can be victimized by sexual violence, we know that it disproportionately affects populations that have been historically marginalized (e.g., people with disabilities, People of Color, and gender and sexual minorities) because of the additional forms of oppression that they experience. When we center health equity in our efforts to end sexual violence, we are able to partner with communities to co-create safer and more inclusive communities that allow all Oklahomans to thrive.

1. During the 12 months before the survey.

2. Sexual dating violence is defined as being forced by someone they were dating or going out with to do sexual things, such as kissing, touching, or being physically forced to have sexual intercourse, that they did not want to do, among students who dated or went out with someone during the 12 months before the survey.

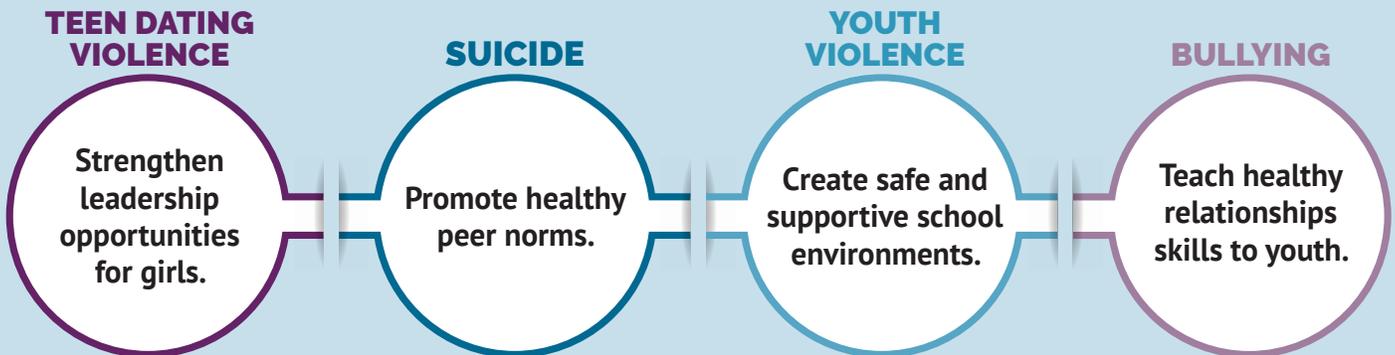
3. Counting things such as kissing, touching, or being made to have sexual intercourse.

4. Felt so sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more in a row that they stopped doing some usual activities.

5. Reported they ever seriously considered attempting suicide, or made a plan about how they would attempt suicide, or actually attempted suicide, or had a suicide attempt that resulted in an injury, poisoning, or overdose that had to be treated by a doctor or nurse.

HOW CAN WE PREVENT SEXUAL VIOLENCE?

Sexual violence shares risk and protective factors with many other forms of violence such as teen dating violence, suicide, bullying, and general youth violence (e.g., fights, threats with weapons, and gang-related violence). This means that we can strategically collaborate across sectors to amplify the positive impact of prevention programming. Some examples of programming that impact multiple types of violence are:



EVERYONE HAS A ROLE TO PLAY IN ENDING SEXUAL VIOLENCE. WHICH ROLE WILL YOU PLAY?



Communicate with the young people in your life. Exploring topics like consent and healthy relationships together can help youth recognize how to respect others and solve problems without violence. When young people feel comfortable talking to the adults in their lives about a wide variety of topics, it can help to keep the door open for important ongoing conversations about the things they're experiencing.



Promote mutual respect. Students who identified as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, or Questioning were significantly more likely than students who identified as heterosexual to have experienced sexual violence (39% vs. 16%, $p < .05$). When communities address the root causes of violence by creating environments built on a culture of mutual respect, all of us can thrive.



Connect your community. Community connectedness and youth feeling connected to their schools are two important protective factors against multiple forms of violence. In order to strengthen these protective factors, schools, organizations, and community members can work together with youth to create environments that are safe and supportive.



Support and provide education. Inclusive, medically accurate education that promotes healthy development and decision-making for all ages is important to teach young people about their bodies and relationships. Knowledge is a powerful tool to help keep young people safe.

ASSISTANCE IS AVAILABLE

The Injury Prevention Service administers a sexual violence prevention program that funds organizations around the state to implement comprehensive prevention strategies tailored to the needs of their local communities. For more information about prevention resources, visit oklahoma.gov/health/svp.

RESOURCES

If you or someone you know has experienced sexual violence, help is available:

Oklahoma SafeLine
1-800-522-SAFE (7233)

StrongHearts Native Helpline
1-844-762-8483
strongheartshelpline.org

love is respect
Hotline | Textline | Online Chat
loveisrespect.org



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