

tweens

twentysomethings

teens

# Tween and Teen Dating Violence and Abuse Study

July 2008



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National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline

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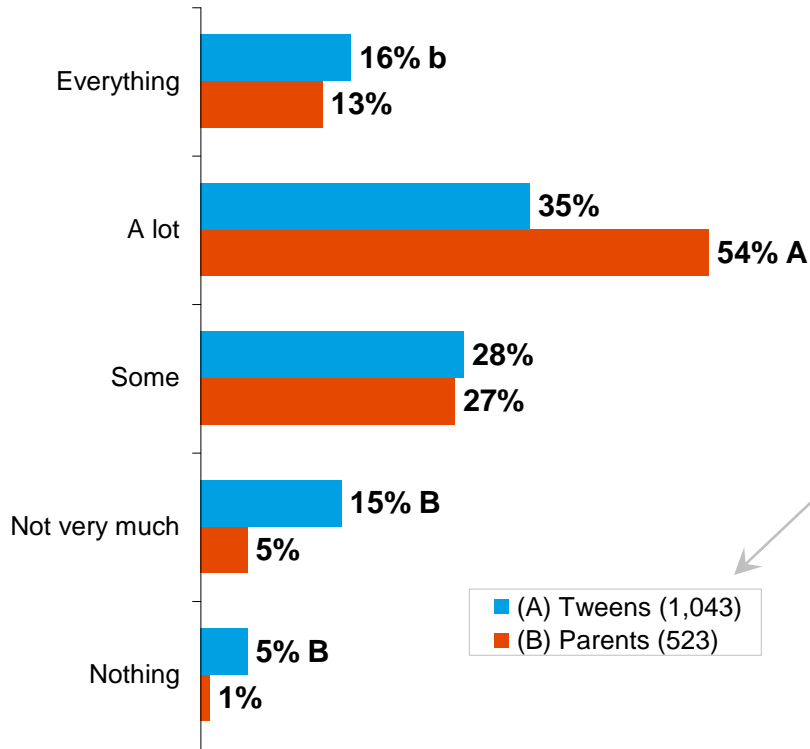
## 2,000-plus online interviews conducted



- > TRU independently sampled three groups and fielded a customized 15-minute survey online to each of them:
  - 1,043 Tweens (ages 11-14)
  - 523 Parents of Tweens
  - 626 Teens (ages 15-18)
- > The sample sizes for these three groups yield margins of error of  $\pm 3.0$ ,  $\pm 4.1$ , and  $\pm 3.9$  (respectively) percentage points at a 95% confidence level.
- > Respondents were not self-selected
  - Respondents were invited by email to participate in a survey; they were not informed of the subject matter before agreeing to participate, nor were they invited from TRU's (or any particular) website.
- > TRU set demographic quotas to balance by gender, achieve a mix across ages, and to ensure adequate ethnic representation to align with U.S. Census data.
- > Surveys fielded nationally from January 2 -18, 2008.



## HOW MUCH INFO SHARED WITH PARENTS (SAMPLE GRAPH)



- > Throughout this report, letters are used in graphs to represent the rated concepts for statistical testing.
  - A capital letter signifies a value “significantly” higher at the 95% confidence level; a lowercase letter shows that it is directionally higher (90% confidence).
- > Base sizes (the number of people within a segment who answered a question) appear in parentheses in each chart’s legend.
  - Here, we can see that 1,043 tweens and 523 parents of tweens answered the question.

**Question text**  
(as it appeared to respondents)

Where appropriate, parent-wording appears in parentheses.

**Question:** How much would you say your parents (you) know about your (son’s/daughter’s) boyfriend/girlfriend relationships or hooking up experiences?

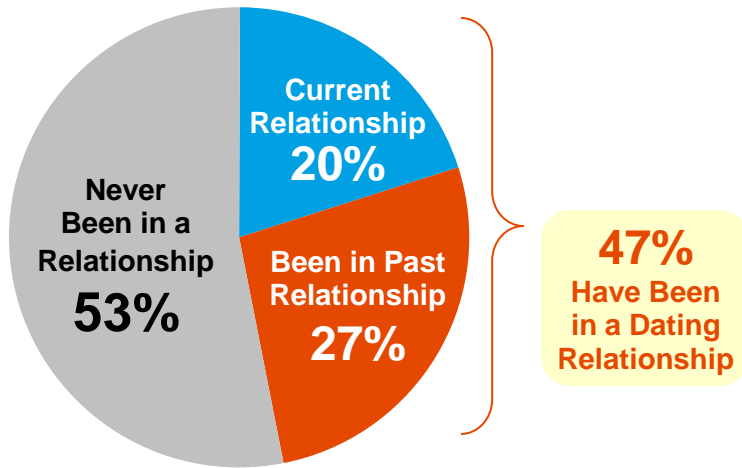
## Summary in brief



- > Dating relationships start younger than realized: nearly half of 11- to 14-year olds have been in a dating relationship.
- > Sex is considered part of tween dating relationships by a surprising number of tweens and parents – though parents believe it is not *their* tween who is having sex.
- > Significant levels of abusive behavior are reported in tween dating relationships, and teens report that abusive behavior increases dramatically in the teen years (age 15-18)
- > Alarming, data reveals that early sexual activity appears to fuel dating violence and abuse among teenagers.
- > Although most parents discuss relationships with their tweens, they really seem to be in the dark about what goes on.
- > Today's tween relationship behavior may foreshadow a new wave of disturbing abuse among teens in the near future, unless something is done to prevent it.

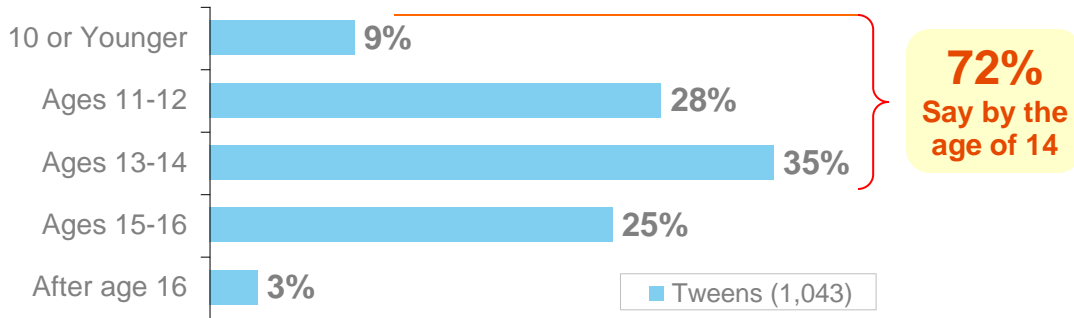
## Dating relationships begin much earlier than expected

### TWEENS' (AGES 11-14) RELATIONSHIP STATUS



- > Nearly half of all tweens (47%)—and more than one in three 11-to 12-year-olds (37%) [not charted]—say they have been in a boyfriend/girlfriend relationship.
- > Nearly three in four tweens (72%) say dating relationships begin by age 14.

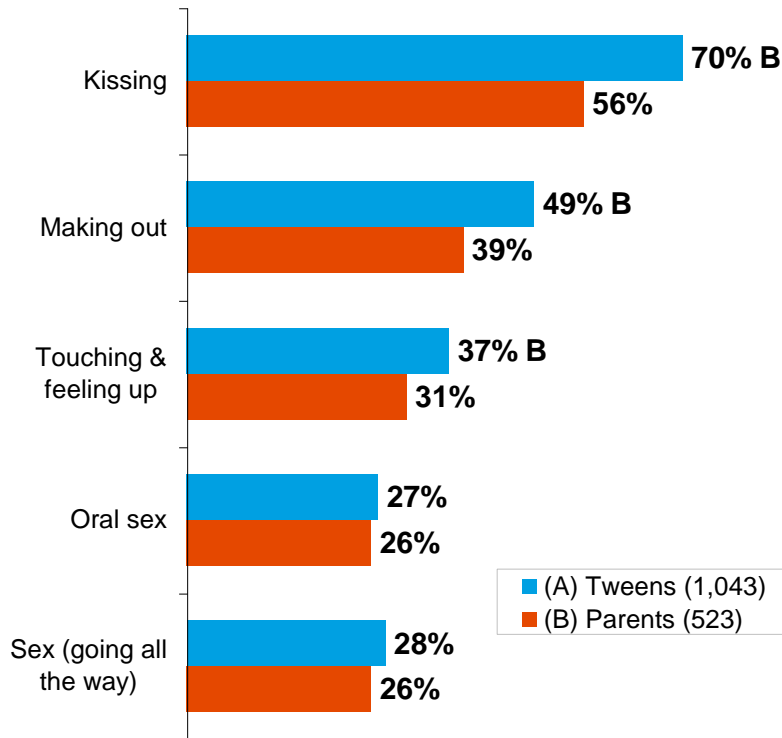
### WHEN RELATIONSHIPS BEGIN



**Question 14:** Have you ever been in a boyfriend/girlfriend relationship?  
**Question 8:** At what age would you say people usually begin a boyfriend/girlfriend relationship?

## Sex is considered to be a part of tween dating relationships by both tweens and parents

### CONSIDERED PART OF A TWEEN DATING RELATIONSHIP



> Amazingly, more than one in four kids and parents say sexual activity is part of tween dating relationships.

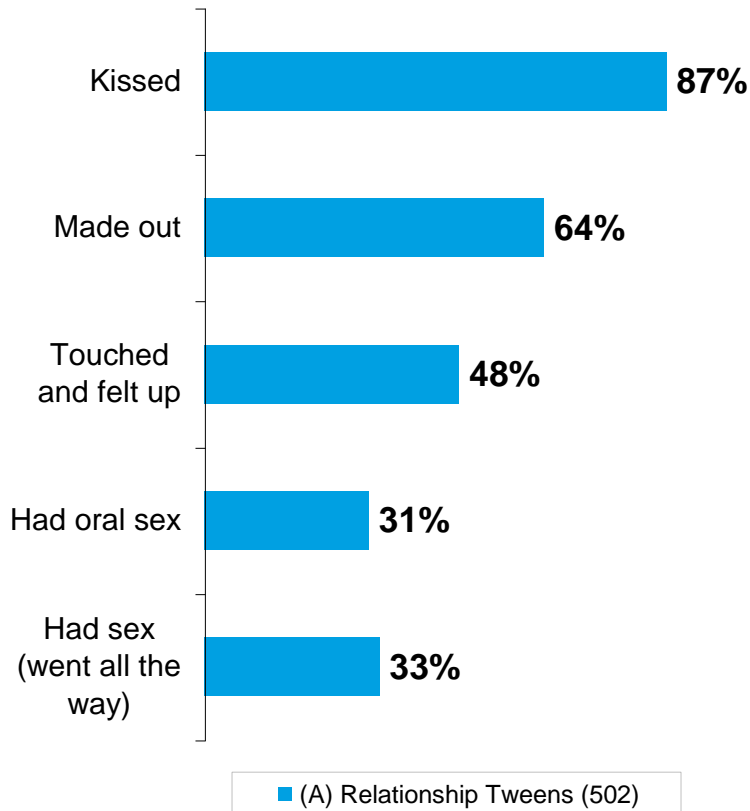
- Roughly one in three tweens (37%) and parents (31%) say touching and feeling up is part of a dating relationship.
- Oral sex is said by 27% of tweens and 26% of parents to be a part of tween relationships.
- More than one in four tweens (28%) and parents (26%) also say that having sex (going all the way) is a part of tween relationships.

**Question 6(9):** Thinking about people your (son/daughter's) age, would you say each of the following is part of a **boyfriend/girlfriend relationship**?



# One in three tweens in a relationship reports sexual behavior among people their age

## KNOW FRIENDS/PEERS WHO HAVE...

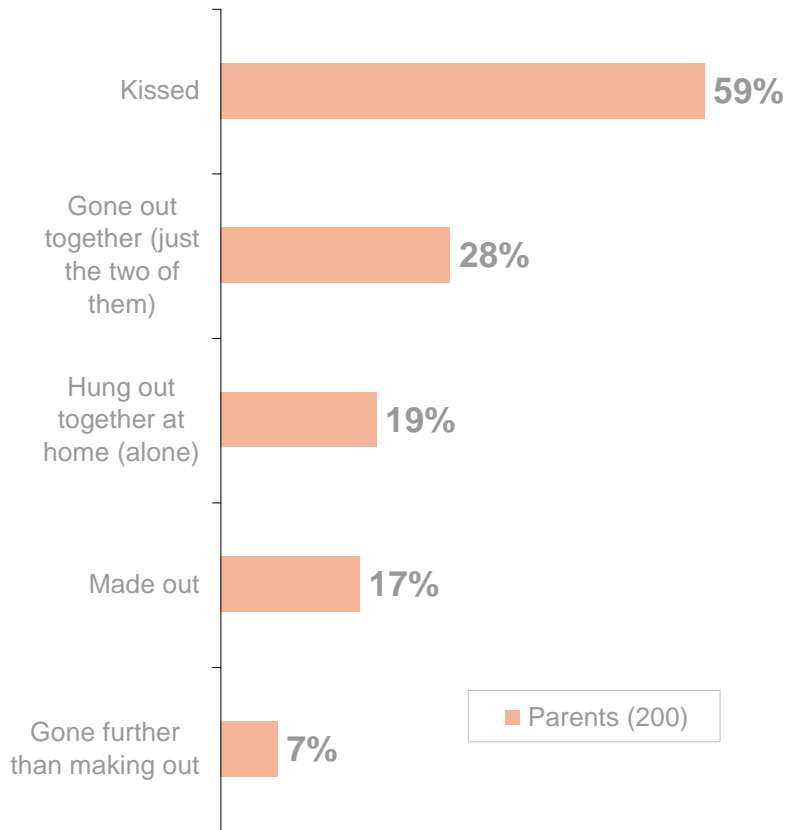


- > Nearly half of tweens in a relationship (48%) know a friend or someone else their age who touched and felt up a partner.
- > Roughly one-third of those tweens say they know friends and peers who have had oral sex (31%) and who have had sex (33%).

**Question 10:** Do you know anyone among your friends and people your age who have done any of the following with a boyfriend/girlfriend or with someone he/she has hooked up with?

## Parents believe their own child to be innocent

### MY 11-14 YEAR OLD HAS...

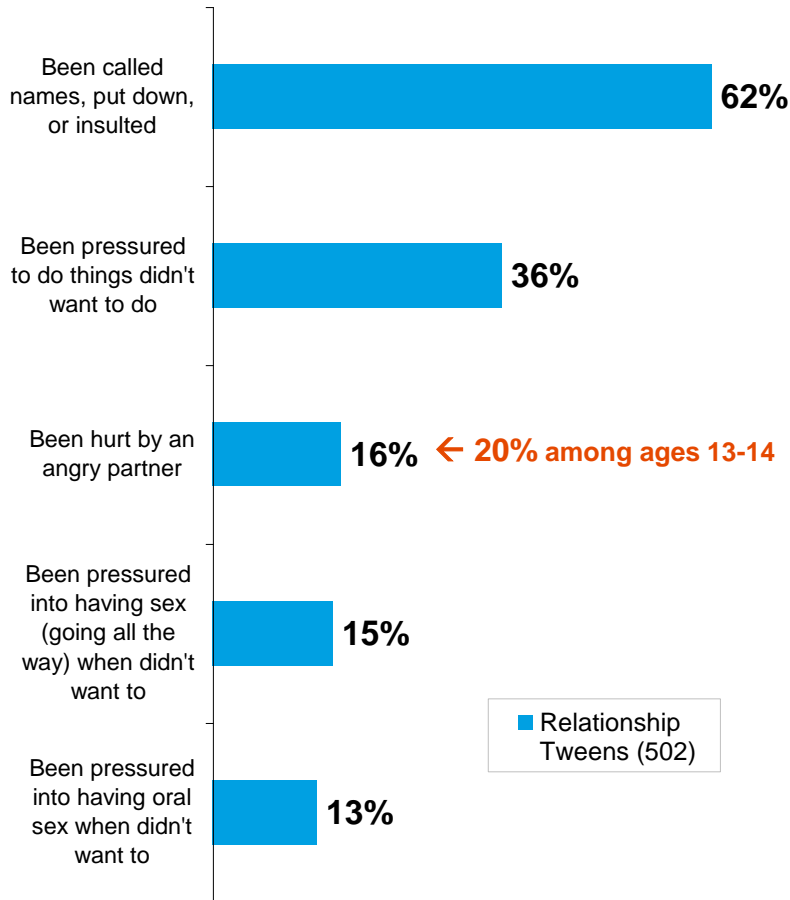


- > Although many parents of tweens in a relationship consider sex to be a part of a tween relationships, only 7% of them believe that *their own* child has gone further than kissing or making out.
  - The majority of these parents (59%) realize their tween has kissed a dating partner—and 17% know that their child made out with someone.

**Question 21:** Thinking about your son's/daughter's boyfriend/girlfriend relationship(s) or hooking up partner(s), has he/she ever done any of the following you know of?

## Surprising levels of abusive behavior reported in tween dating relationships

### KNOW FRIENDS/PEERS WHO HAVE...



> Among 11- to 14-year-olds who have been in a relationship:

- A strong majority (62%) say they know friends who have been verbally abused (called stupid, worthless, ugly, etc.) by a boyfriend/girlfriend.
  - ✓ Two in five (41%) [not charted] know friends who have been called names, put down, or insulted via cellphone, IM, social networking sites (like MySpace and Facebook), etc.
- More than a third (36%) know friends and peers their age who have been pressured by a boyfriend/girlfriend to do things they didn't want to do.
- One in five 13-14 year olds in relationships (20%) say they know friends and peers who have been struck in anger (kicked, hit, slapped, or punched) by a boyfriend or girlfriend.

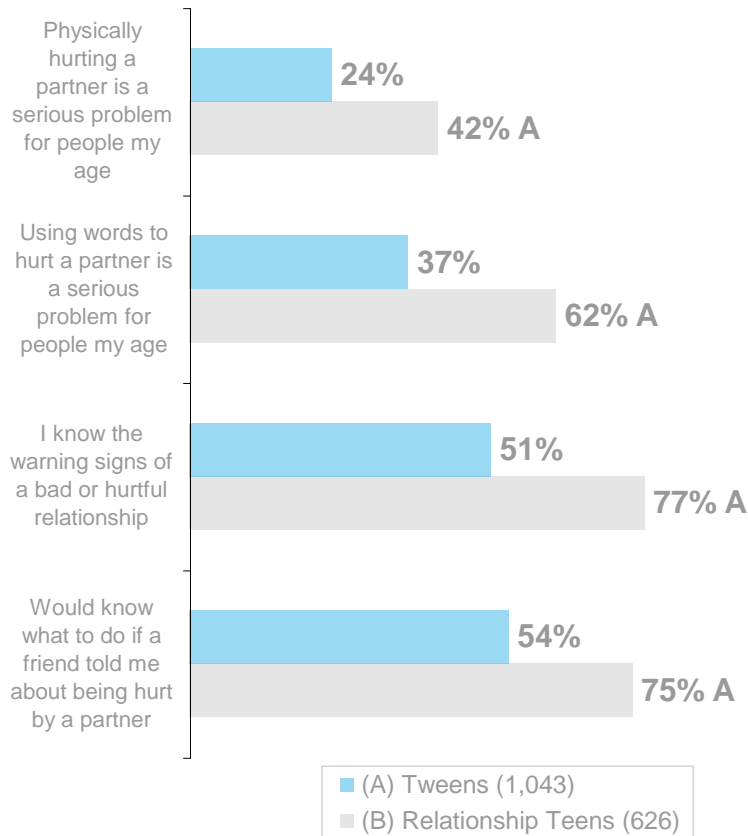
**Question 11:** Do you know anyone among your friends and people your age who...?

**Question 12:** Do you know anyone among your friends and people your age who have ever had a boyfriend/girlfriend or someone he/she has hooked up with...

## Tweens recognize that abuse is a serious problem, but they don't know what to do about it

### AGREE WITH STATEMENT

(Top 2 Box: "Somewhat" or "Strongly Agree")

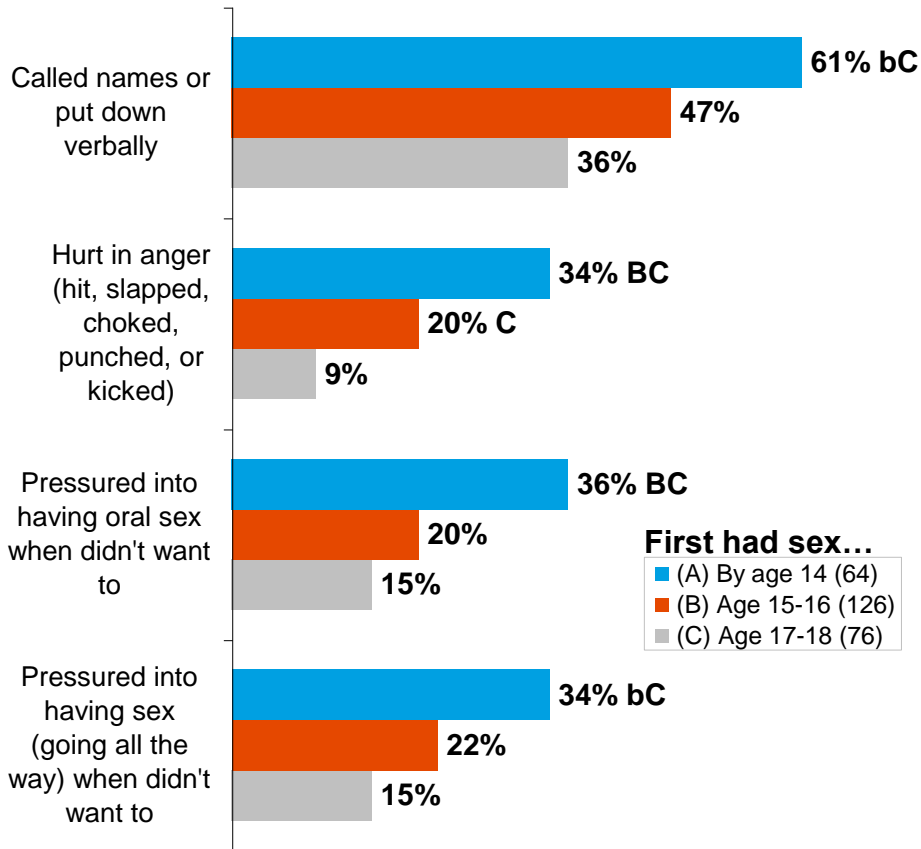


- > One in four tweens (24%) say dating violence—physically hurting relationship partners—is a serious problem for people their age.
  - Additionally, more than a third (37%) agree that verbal abuse is a serious problem for people their age.
- > Still, only half of all tweens (51%) claim to know the warning signs of a bad/hurtful tween-dating relationship.
  - Only slightly more (54%) said they would know what to do if a friend came to them for help.
- > Notably, teens reporting significantly higher on each of these measures provides evidence that the seriousness of these problems increase with age

**Question 13:** How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statement?

## Data reveals alarming correlation between early sexual experiences and teen dating violence/abuse

### ABUSIVE DATING BEHAVIORS AMONG TEENS

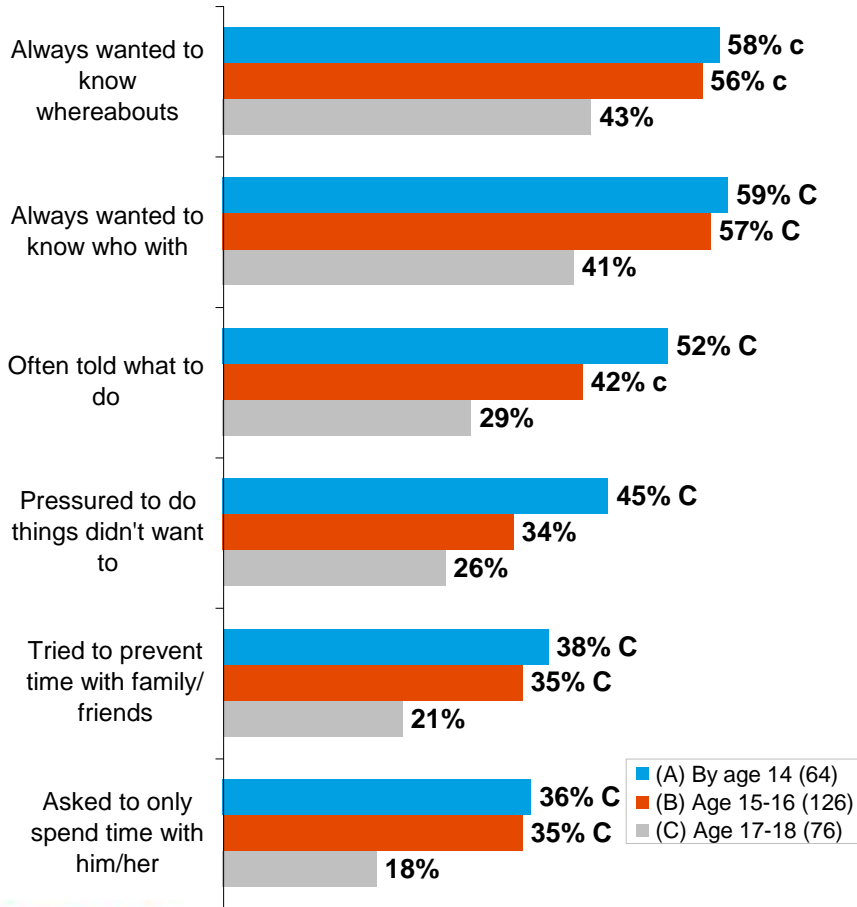


- > Among all teens who had sex by age 14, 69% report having gone through one or more types of abuse in a relationship. [not charted]
  - Two in five teens surveyed (42%) reported that they've had sex. [not charted]
- > An alarming one out of three teens who had sex by age 14 (34%) say they have been physically abused by an angry partner (hit, kicked, or choked).
  - Among teens who first had sex at age 15 or 16, one in five (20%) have endured such beatings.
  - For teens who started having sex later, the physical abuse rate, though still concerning, is significantly lower (9%).
- > The correlation between earlier sexual behavior and higher levels of abuse appears to also hold true for verbal and sexual forms of abuse.

Question 19 (teens): Have you ever had a partner in a dating or serious relationship who...?

## Controlling behaviors also endured by more teens who report early sexual behavior

### CONTROLLING DATING BEHAVIORS AMONG TEENS

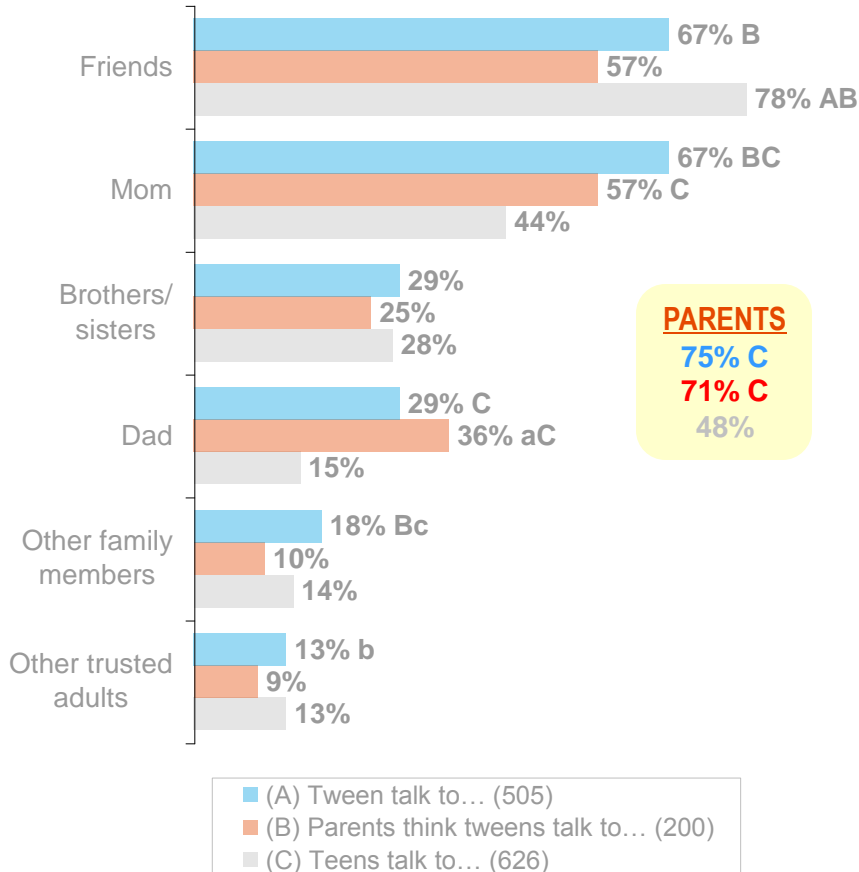


- > More than one in three teens report that their partners wanted to know where they were (36%) and who they were with (37%) all the time. [not charted]
  - Among teens who had sex by age 14, these tracking behaviors are much higher (58% and 59%, respectively).
- > Dramatically more teens who had sex by age 14 say they've been pressured by a partner to do things they didn't want to do (45% vs. 22% of all surveyed teens).
- > Nearly twice as many teens who had sex by age 14 said they were called names or put down by their partner (61% vs. 33% of all teens surveyed).

Question 19 (teens): Have you ever had a partner in a dating or serious relationship who...?

# Tweens and teens talk to parents and friends about their dating relationship

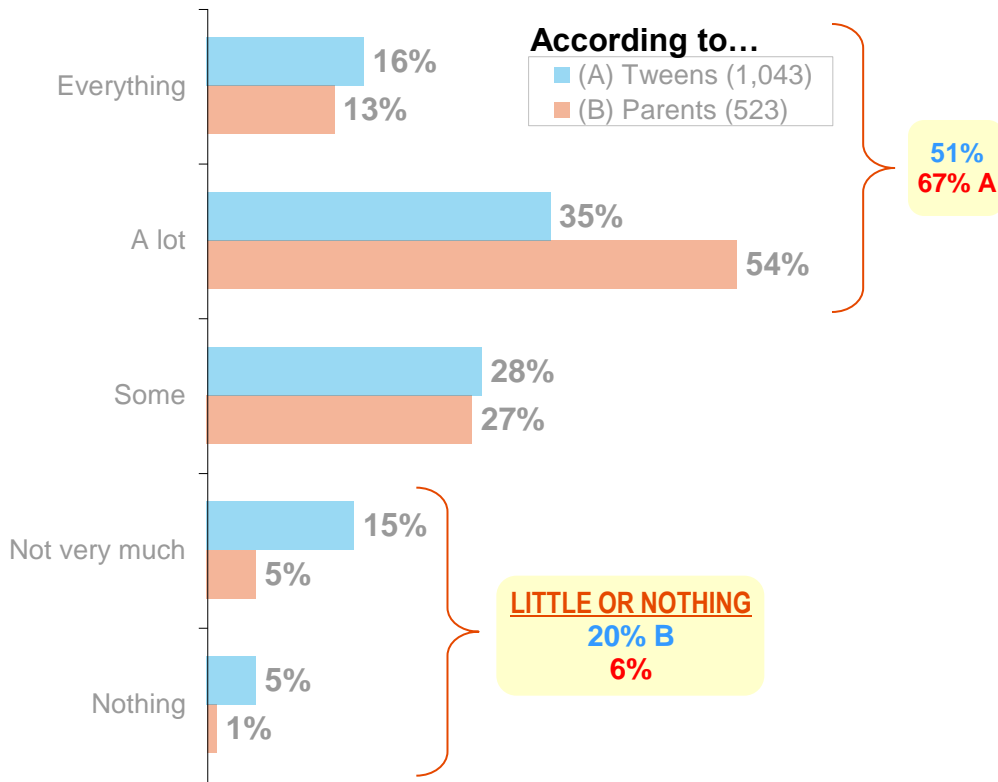
## WHO TALK TO ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS



- > Two-thirds of tweens in relationships identified mom and friends (each 67%) as people with whom they discuss their experiences.
  - Fewer parents identified tweens primary partners (each 57%)—but did correctly identify what were tweens’ top resources for relationship discussions.
  - Far more teens identified friends (78%) as someone they talk to about relationships than named their mom (44%).
    - ✓ Only 48% of teens report going to mom or dad to talk about dating relationships.
- > Notably, most parents who say they haven’t talked to their tween about relationships (70%) say it’s because their child is too young. [not charted]

# Parents know less than they think they do

## HOW MUCH PARENTS KNOW ABOUT TWEENS' RELATIONSHIPS



> Although parents are right that most of their tweens talk to them about dating relationships, they appear to overestimate the amount of what is shared.

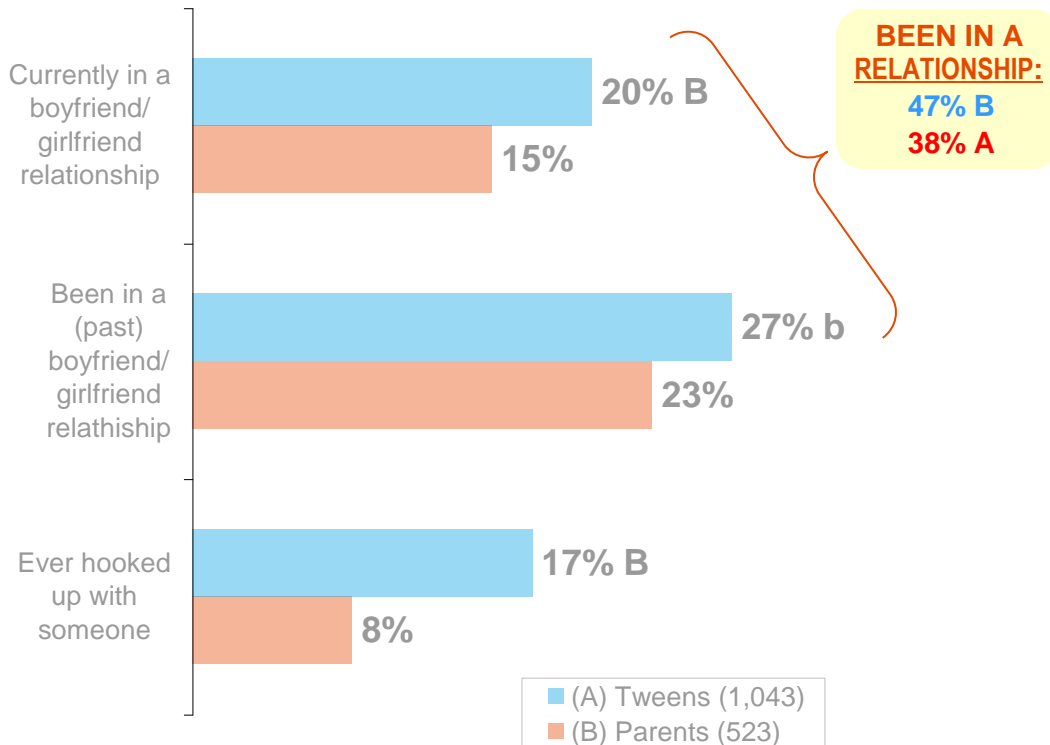
- Two thirds of parents (67%) think they know a lot (“a lot” or “everything”) about their tween’s relationship—but significantly fewer tweens (51%) concur.
- More than three times as many tweens (20%) as parents (6%) admit that parents know little or nothing about the tweens’ dating relationships.

**Question 22(32):** How much would you say your parents (you) know about your (son’s/daughter’s) boyfriend/girlfriend relationships or hooking up experiences?



## Parents underestimate tweens' dating and hooking-up frequency

### RELATIONSHIP STATUS

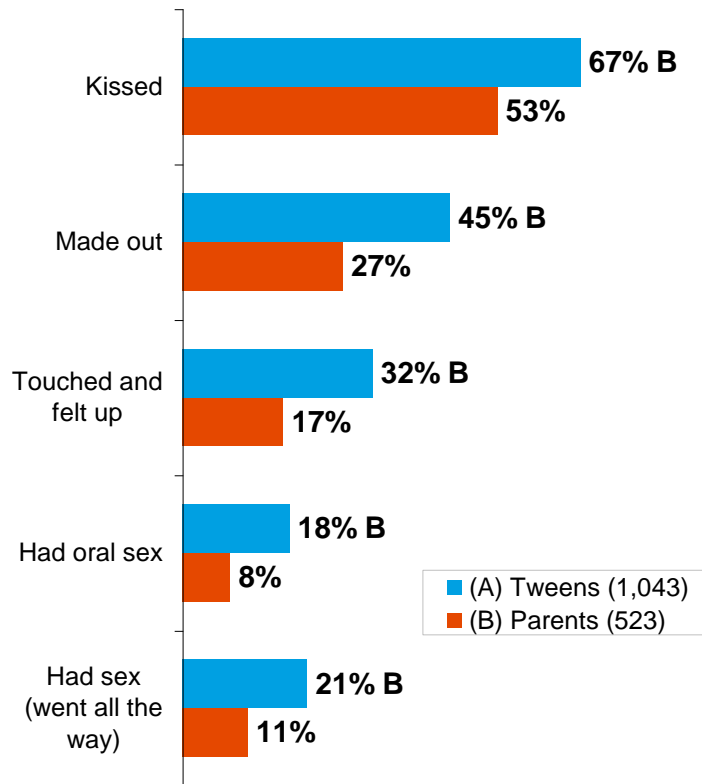


- > Fewer parents identified their tween as having been in a relationship (38%) than tweens said they've been in one (47%).
- > Twice as many tweens report having "hooked up" with a partner (17%) as parents reported that of their child (8%).

**Question 14(16):** Have you (Has your son/daughter) ever been in a boyfriend/girlfriend relationship?

## Parents are out of the loop with their tween’s friends’ sexual behaviors

### KNOW FRIENDS/PEERS WHO HAVE...

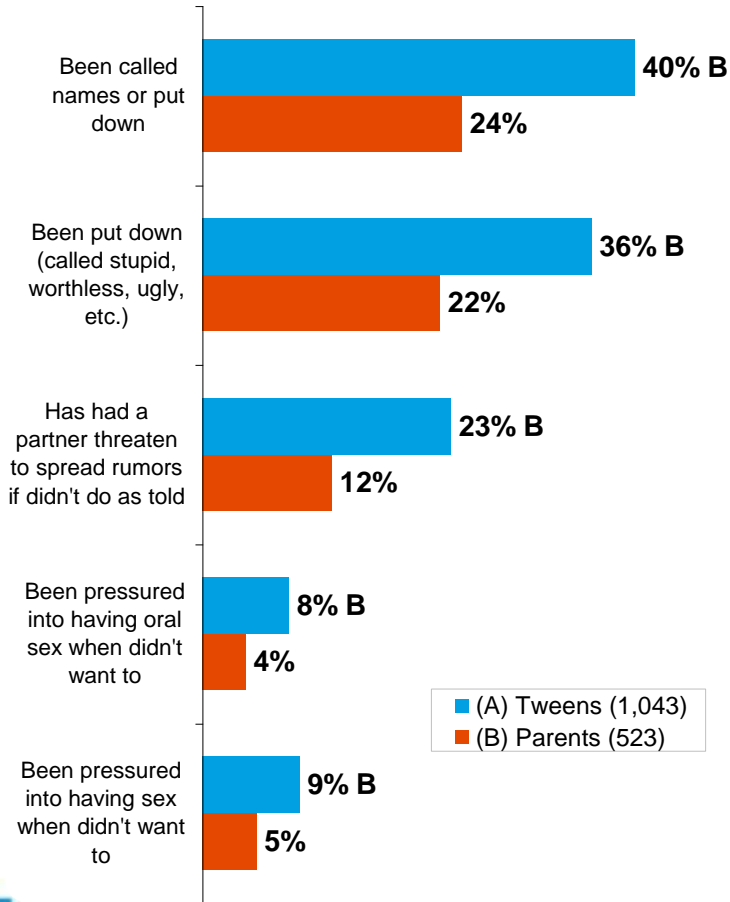


- > Across the various dating behaviors, fewer parents than 11- to 14-year-olds report knowing a tween who has done them with a relationship partner.
- > More than twice as many tweens (18%) as parents (8%) know an 11- to 14-year-old who has had oral sex.
- > Nearly twice as many tweens as parents know someone between the ages of 11 and 14 who has touched and felt up a partner (32% vs. 17%)—and who has had sex (21% vs. 11%).

**Question 10(14):** Do you know anyone among your (son’s/daughter’s) friends and people your (his/her) age who have done any of the following with a partner?

## Parents are largely unaware of the true abuse levels present among tweens

### PARENTS' KNOWLEDGE OF ABUSE IN TWEEN RELATIONSHIPS

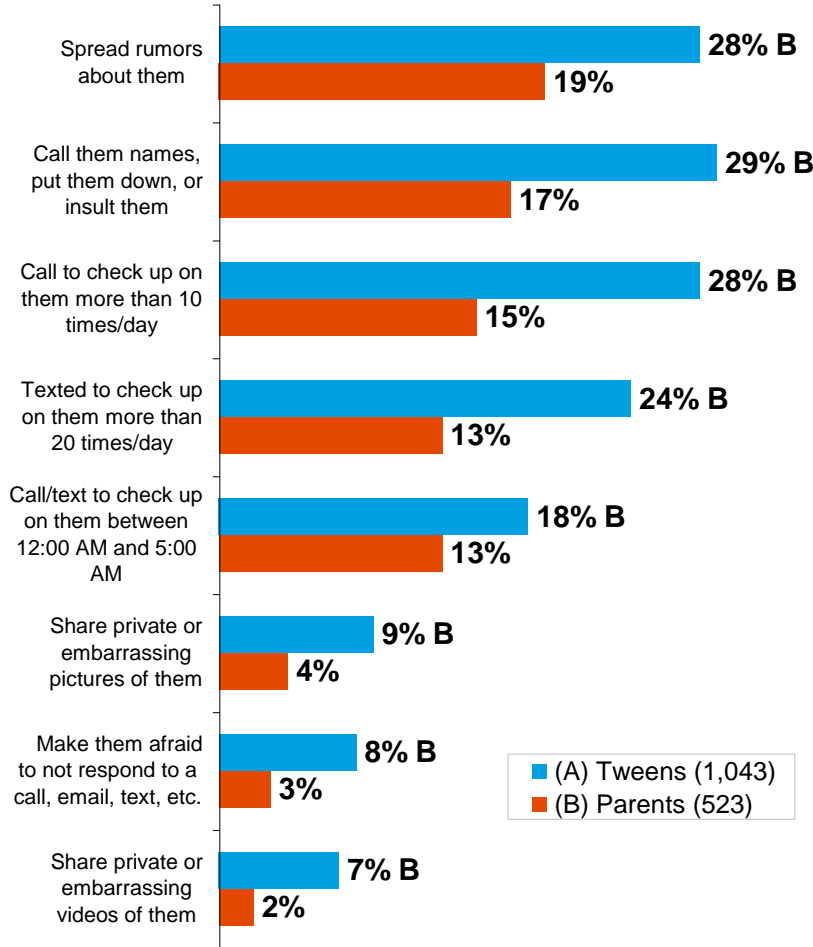


- > Only 12% of parents (compared with 23% of tweens) know someone their child's age who has had a partner threaten to spread rumors if they didn't do as told.
- > One in four parents (24%, versus 40% of tweens) know someone their child's age who has been called names or put down by a boyfriend/girlfriend.
  - Only 22% of parents (compared with 36% of all tweens) know someone their child's age who has been called stupid, worthless, ugly, etc. by a boy/girlfriend.
- > Twice as many tweens as parents know a friend or peer who has been pressured to have oral sex (8% vs. 4%) and who have been pressured to have sex (go all the way) against their will (9% vs. 5%).

**Question 11(15):** Do you know anyone among your (son's/daughter's) friends and people your (his/her) age who...?

## Parents unaware how much tweens are harassed/embarrassed electronically

### KNOW FRIENDS/PEERS WHO HAD A PARTNER...



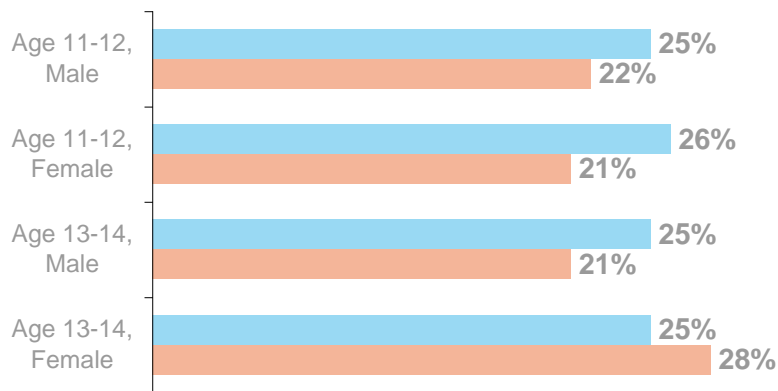
> Abuse via tech-devices and networking sites is far more prevalent than parents realize.

- Nearly twice as many tweens as parents know someone between the ages of 11 and 14 who has been checked up on via cellphone more than 10 times per day (28% vs. 15%) or by texting more than 20 times per day (24% vs. 13%).
- Significantly more tweens (than parents realize) also know friends who:
  - ✓ Had rumors spread about them electronically.
  - ✓ Had private and embarrassing pictures and video of them shared.
  - ✓ Have been verbally abused via cellphone, IM, text, networking site, etc.
  - ✓ Have been made to feel afraid not to respond to an electronic communication.

**Question 12(16):** Do you know anyone among your (son's/daughter's) friends and people your (his/her) age who has/have ever had a boyfriend/girlfriend or someone he/she has hooked up with...

# Respondent demographics

## AGE / GENDER

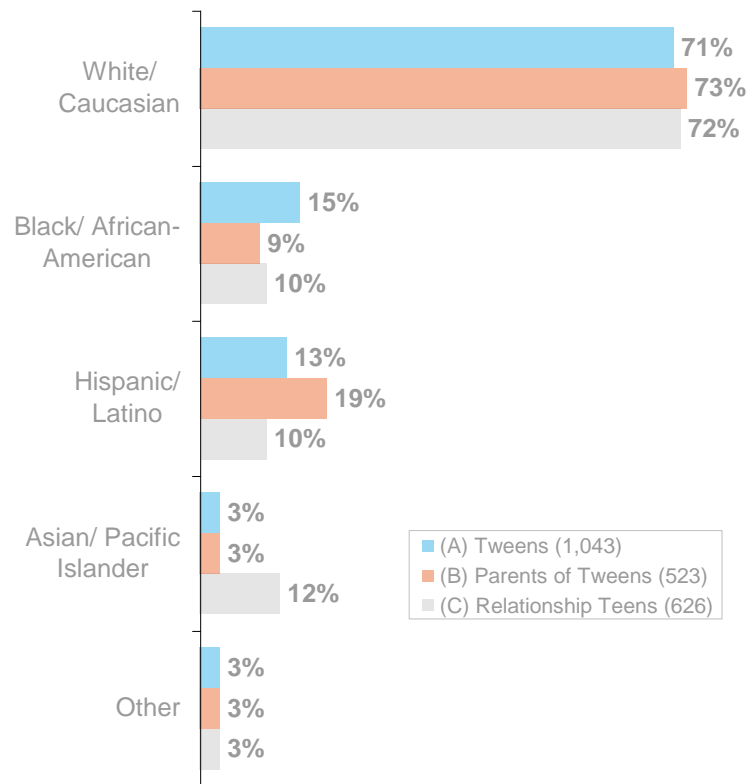


■ Tweens (1,043)  
■ Parents' Child (523)



■ Relationship Teens (626)

## ETHNICITY

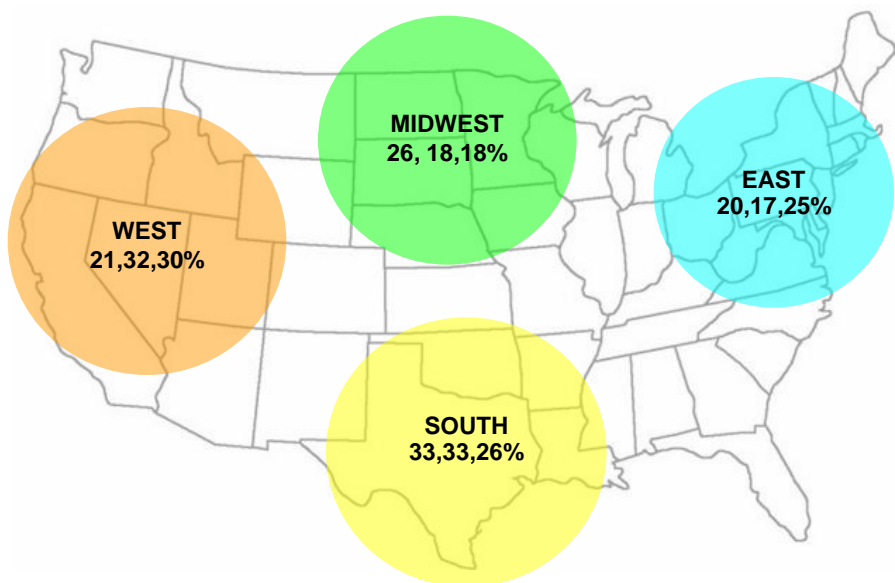


■ (A) Tweens (1,043)  
■ (B) Parents of Tweens (523)  
■ (C) Relationship Teens (626)

Question 1/2/3: Are you... (N=622)

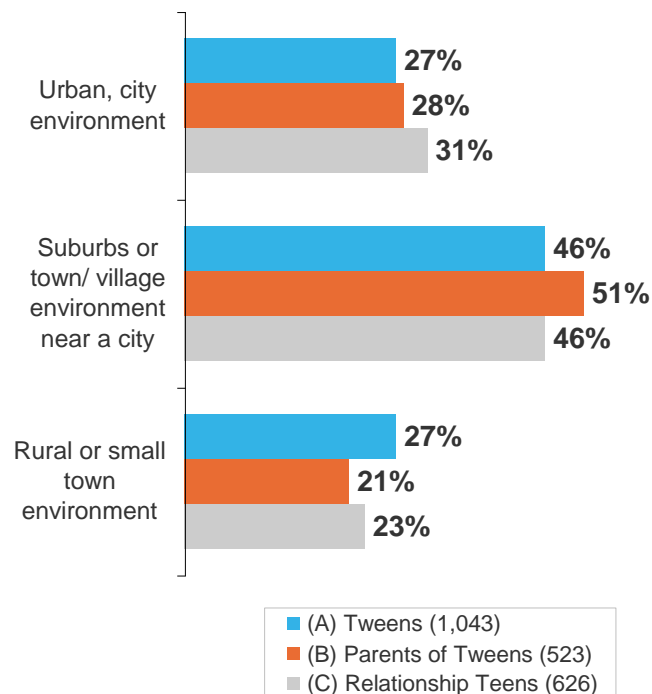
# Respondent demographics

## GEOGRAPHIC DISPERSION



**Note:** percents within each region represent tweens (n=1,043), parents of tweens (n=523), and relationship teens (n=626) respectively

## COMMUNITY TYPE



**Question:** What state do you live in?  
**Question:** Which of the following best describes the area where you live?

## Fifth & Pacific Companies, Inc. (formerly Liz Claiborne Inc.) ongoing commitment to understanding abuse in relationships



- > In 2005 and 2006, Fifth & Pacific Companies, Inc. (formerly Liz Claiborne Inc.) commissioned TRU to conduct quantitative research to determine the levels of verbal, physical, and sexual abuse occurring among American teenagers.
- > As part of an ongoing commitment to understanding and addressing abuse that may be taking place in the “dating” relationships of young people, Fifth & Pacific Companies, Inc. (formerly Liz Claiborne Inc.) commissioned research among tweens (ages 11-14) and parents of tweens to explore the dating behavior and potential signs of abuse among this young segment.
  - Teens who have been in a relationship (ages 15-18) were also surveyed for added perspective and to test whether their relationship experiences help to predict dating success.

## Explore tween dating and relationship abuse



- > Understand the “dating” behavior of tweens
  - What defines dating (including romantic relationships and “hooking up”) for tweens?
  - When do tween relationships begin? Who are tween “daters”?
  - To what extent do these relationships include sexual behavior?
- > Assess potential abuse in tween dating relationships
  - Do tweens recognize or understand abuse in their relationships?
  - When do signs of power and control enter tween relationships?
  - Do tweens think they are in relationships that might be abusive?
  - Is there a relationship between early sexual behavior and subsequent dating abuse?
- > Understand what parents know about their tween’s dating behavior and signs of abuse
  - Are parents in-the-know or clueless on the topic of abuse?
  - Would parents recognize the signs of abuse in tween relationships?
  - Are parents having conversations with their tweens about abuse?



## The terminology listed below is used throughout this report

### > Tweens

- 11- to 14-year-olds

### > Parents

- Surveyed respondents who have an 11- to 14-year-old child

### > Teens (or “relationship teens”)

- 15- to 18-year-olds who have been in a relationship (teens who had never been in a relationship were screened)

### > Dating relationship

- A “boyfriend/girlfriend” relationship (when referring to tween relationships)

### > Relationship tweens

- *Tweens* who report they’ve ever been in a dating relationship or “hooked up” with a partner

tweens

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