



**Center for Impact Research**  
***Domestic Violence and Birth Control Sabotage:***  
***A Report from the Teen Parent Project***  
**Executive Summary**

(entire report available at [www.impactresearch.org](http://www.impactresearch.org))

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In 1998 and 1999, the Center for Impact Research surveyed 474 young mothers in Chicago at two Illinois Department of Human Services Teen Parent Services sites and two community-based health clinics.

The study found that:

- 55% of the young women had experienced domestic violence at the hands of their boyfriends during the previous 12 months
- 41% of these women (about 30% of the entire sample) reported experiencing the most severe forms of domestic violence behaviors
- The average length of relationships among young women currently involved with a partner was 2.74 years
- Young women with older boyfriends were more likely to experience domestic violence
- 51% of the young women reported experiencing at least one form of birth control sabotage from their boyfriends
- 21% of the young women had experienced some form of work or school-related sabotage from their boyfriends

### **Sample Demographics**

The girls surveyed ranged in age from 11 to 21 years of age. Most girls were older teens (69% were between the ages of 18 and 21). The mean age in the sample was 18 years. Seventy percent of the girls were between the ages of 15 and 17 at the time of the birth of their first child. The racial background of the girls was a reflection of the Chicago neighborhoods in which the survey sites were located (95% African American girls, 4% Hispanic girls, and 1% girls of other races). Sixty-four percent reported that they were currently attending school. Only two percent reported any education beyond high school level. Sixty percent reported either pursuing or having completed a GED. Only 20% reported being currently employed.

### **Grouping of DV Behaviors**

The following definitions were used to identify domestic violence behaviors:

- **Level 1** behaviors include the experience of direct verbal and symbolic aggression, in which a young woman's boyfriend attempts to control, harass, and/or threaten her and her family or friends.
- **Level 2** domestic violence includes the experience of physically aggressive behaviors such as throwing objects, pushing, grabbing or slapping.
- **Level 3** behaviors are severely aggressive; they include kicking, hitting, beating, injuring, raping or threatening with or assaulting the young woman with a weapon.

### **Characteristics of Participants' Partners**

Eighty-one percent of the girls had current boyfriends and 72% of the teen mothers reported that their current boyfriends were the fathers of at least one of their children. Seventy-six percent of the girls received some financial support from their boyfriends. The males with whom these young women were

involved, were—as a group—older than the teen girls that were surveyed. The girls’ boyfriends ranged in age from 16 to 44; the mean age of the males was 21.84 years. Almost half of the girls (43%) were currently involved with males who were four or more years older than they were. Twenty-one percent of the girls’ partners were currently in school and 48% had a high school diploma, GED, or post high school education. Forty-eight percent of the boyfriends, 95% of whom were 18 or older, were currently employed.

## **Birth Control Sabotage**

As suggested by the few existing studies, there was a strong association between domestic violence and birth control sabotage among the teens surveyed. Forty-eight percent of the young women surveyed reported experiencing verbal sabotage of birth control and 14 % reported experiencing behavioral sabotage of birth control.

*Verbal sabotage* of birth control was assessed by asking the respondent whether her boyfriend had said any of the following to her in the previous 12 months:

- “You want to use family planning so you can sleep around with other men.”
- “If we have a baby you will always have a part of me and I will always have a part of you.”
- “If you have a baby, you will never have to worry about me leaving you. I will always be around.”
- “You would have my baby if you really loved me.”

*Behavioral Sabotage* was identified through the use of these two yes or no items:

- “My boyfriend won’t let me use family planning.”
- “My boyfriend forces me to have sex when I am not protected.”

## **Work/School-Related Sabotage**

Twenty-one percent of the young women in the sample had experienced some form of work or school-related sabotage from their boyfriends. Of those young women who reported having experienced some level of domestic violence from their boyfriends, 34% reported some level of work or school-related sabotage. Among girls experiencing severe aggression behaviors from their boyfriends, 57% experienced some level of work or school-related sabotage.

*Work and school-related sabotage* were assessed by asking the respondent whether her boyfriend had done any of the following in the previous twelve months:

- Caused injuries that kept her from going to school or work.
- Tore up her books or homework papers.
- Kept her up all night so that she couldn’t go to school or concentrate at school.
- Promised to baby-sit or drive her to school or work and hadn’t shown up.
- Destroyed her clothes so that she couldn’t go to work, trying to get her to quit.
- Tried to guilt trip her by saying that she needed to stay at home with her child.
- Came up with emergencies, which prevented her from going to school or work.

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