

## Online Dating Violence Landscape Analysis

### Background

#### **Dating violence:**

Online dating violence is about power and control - physical, verbal, emotional, digital (with increase in social media, stalking), and financial abuse.

- Young women ages 18-24 experience the highest levels of intimate partner violence. nisvs
- 1/3 of US teens have experienced a form of dating violence. (cdc, 2015)
- 90% of people who experience dating violence, experience financial abuse as well.
- In 2012, according to a FOIA request, over 24% of people who reported dating violence experienced it as a result of online dating apps.<sup>1</sup>
- 57% of women respondents said they'd been harassed while using dating apps (Pew, 2016)
- 8 States in the U.S. do not consider a violent dating relationship domestic abuse. Therefore, adolescents, teens, and 20-somethings are unable to apply for a restraining order for protection from the abuser.

Warning signs of dating violence in friends:

- Isolation - if a friend is not around as much, if they have to devote an extreme amount of time to their partner
- Overprotective of friend, their partner shows up in random places

Ways to open the conversation with a friend:

- Hey, I noticed you've been skipping psychology class a lot, is everything okay?
- Open lines of communication - don't ask accusatory questions like "why did you listen to him? Why did you go there with him? This shuts people down in most cases.
- Get creative in ways they can let you know if they are not safe. For example, "if I have a pink scrunchy on my wrist, then I am uncomfortable and need help exiting a situation."

#### **Online dating violence:**

A lot of times we define violence in a relationship as only physical violence, when there are other more subtle components to an unhealthy relationship.

Is dating violence a prosecutorial offense?

Online dating violence offenders: A new kind of offender

In 2016, the UK's National Crime Agency (NCA) flagged a new type of sexual offender. Unlike the tendencies of offenders we usually talk about, online dating offenders are less likely than

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<https://qz.com/890320/nobody-know-how-dangerous-online-dating-really-is-and-dating-sites-wont-talk-about-it/>

other sexual offenders to have committed any kind of crime before, but instead exploits the “ease of access and arm-chair approach” to meeting people that dating sites enable.

#### Example

Dating violence:

“I love you so much, I dont think you should hang out with your friends”

Online dating violence:

“I love you so much, let me go through your phone and make sure everything’s okay.”

#### App specific topics of interest

Intersection with race:

- Tinder users can remove and reject racialized profiles by swiping left, while others choose matches based on racial stereotypes of who would reluctantly accept more in an interaction, for example White women are often perceived as more docile than black women.
- “Match” algorithms have also been called into question with regards to issues of racism and racial bias within dating apps. Even if you say “no preference” for ethnicity within your dating app profile, users report that many dating apps tend to show you people of your own race (Haidrani, 2016).
- The largest problem surrounding the issue of racial dating bias on dating platforms is that it too often the issue gets reduced to “personal preference”. The discussion on racial bias and “preference” is upheld by a system of institutional racism that begets more tangible harm. This is facilitated by technological functions such as algorithmic sorting which is a phenomenon users on the dating app Coffee Meets Bagel have described as their experience using the dating app (Notopoulos, 2016).
- OkCupid, has found clear evidence of racial discrimination within their platform and it’s culture. OkCupid has been keeping track of race since 2009 and has found that people gravitate “toward people who look like themselves.” In fact, the site found that racial bias went up between 2009 and 2014. The site also found that “82 percent of non-Black men on OkCupid showed some bias against black women” (Oktrends, 2014).
- POCs often report and express concern with the length of time it takes dating app platforms to respond to and address their concerns and experiences of racism and violence.
- Users can go even further by explicitly specifying preference and undesirability of users from marginalized communities in their profiles. By doing so they have the capacity to objectify, fetishize, and hyper sexualize users from marginalized communities, which can be damaging because of racism, ableism, homophobia, transphobia and sexism.

Intersection with sexism:

- The lgbtq community faces unique safety risks when online dating. Moreover, trans youth face unique vulnerabilities when they are meeting potential romantic partners online. They must decide whether to present themselves as trans in their profile, or to reveal their trans identity to a person after they meet or match. There are significant risks

to disclosing online or later in-person. Revealing in person can not only lead to only rejection or surprise but can also lead to violence if the person feels 'threatened' by their gender identity.

Other factors:

- Hate speech is easier to come across.
- Porn: Pornography can portray extreme sexualization of women and sex and young people often think what they see in porn is what they should be doing in sex. Studies show by age 16, over 80% of boys have used pornography.
  - In a study of 740 women conducted at the University of Texas in 2007, nearly a third reported having sex on the first date and three-quarters of those said they did not use condoms, according to the study by The University of Texas School of Public Health.<sup>2</sup>

Tips and best practices related to online dating violence:

Trust your gut - our bodies very rarely mislead us. If you notice that there are things you are not allowed to do that you have a right to do, seek support.

Warning signs:

- Notice you are not having freedom in your relationship
- Not allowed to do something
- If you dont have choices
- Fell like youre walking on eggshells

We worked with Tinder to create the following list:

When engaging with someone online:

- Never give your personal information, including your address, social security number, or financial info, to your Tinder match.
- Don't give your phone number out until you feel comfortable.
- Take your time when moving conversations off the app.
- Report all suspicious and inappropriate behavior immediately. For example:
  - Requests for money
  - Harassment or threats
  - Harmful behavior during or after meeting in person
  - Members under 18
  - Spam

When engaging IRL

- Meet and stay in public
- Be in control of your transportation.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-xpm-2007-09-05-0708310249-story.html>

- Let someone close to you know where you are.
- If you feel uncomfortable, leave.
- Make sure the person is who they say they are
  - Do a quick google search to see if they have any other photos online and their name.
  - If you are not sure, ask for a phone call or to skype/facetime before meeting in person.
  - If you are still not sure, sometimes it is safer to not go or to go with a friend.
- Don't share your geolocation
- Stick to texting within the app
- Don't share personal info

Ghosting:

Tips on ways to end a conversation or relationship without ghosting:

Example, "You"

Portrayals of abusive relationships are prevalent in pop culture. We this in the show You Based on what you saw in the clip or show and what we discussed earlier, what are the aspects of abuse?

Romanticized view of being protected by someone. Being seen, protected...can lead to stalking - hes breaking into her social media without her consent.

A healthy relationship is one where your boundaries are respected, when you are able to have open and honest communication, when someone respects your consent, when you are allowed to have that independence and freedom, when you're friends or family are not being taken away from you and you're able to live your life the way you want to.

An unhealthy relationship is when someone is doing things without your consent - breaking into your social media for example - there is a romanticized view of being protected and taken care of that a lot of us enjoy.

Factors that could be a red flag when online dating:

- Racial slurs or other derogatory language
- Sending threats or offensive messages to your match on and off the app
- Harassing your matches on or off the app
- Sending sexually explicit content on or off the app without your match's consent
- Sending spam or solicitation, including links to commercial websites or attempts to sell products or services