

Domestic Violence and Guns

Fact Sheet



Domestic abusers use firearms as a means by which to exert power and coercive control over their victims. They threaten to kill their victims, their victims' children, pets, community members, and themselves.¹

- An estimated 13.6% of American women and 5.9% of American men have been threatened by an intimate partner with a firearm.²
 - Of American women threatened with a firearm, 43% have been physically injured with a firearm (shot, pistol whipped, sexually assaulted, etc.)³
- A survey of contacts to the National Domestic Violence Hotline whose intimate partners had access to firearms found:
 - 10% said the intimate partner had fired a gun during an argument; and
 - Two-thirds said they believed their intimate partner was capable of killing them.⁴
- Firearms threats and fear of intimate partner firearms violence are associated with more severe PTSD symptoms.⁵
- There is a statistically significant relationship between intimate partner stalking and gun threats.⁶

Firearms are the weapon of choice for intimate partner homicides.

- Most intimate partner homicides are committed with firearms.⁷
- The risk of intimate partner femicide increases at least 5-fold when a male intimate partner has access to a firearm.⁸ Another study puts the increase at 11-fold.⁹
- After years of decline, intimate partner homicides have increased recently, driven by a surge in homicides committed with firearms; homicides committed by other means have continued to decrease.¹⁰
- Intimate partner homicide is the leading cause of mortality during pregnancy and post-partum.¹¹
- More than a quarter of homicides in the United States are related to domestic violence.¹²

Intimate partner homicides also target individuals other than the direct victim.

- Almost one in three children under the age of thirteen killed by firearms are killed in an intimate partner violence-related incident.¹³
- Between 2010 and 2016, a plurality of officers killed in the line of duty were killed while responding to a domestic violence incident.¹⁴
- Between 2014 and 2019, 59.1% of mass shootings were related to domestic violence. In 68% of mass shootings, the shooter either had a history of domestic violence or killed an intimate partner or family member.¹⁵
- 20% of people killed in domestic violence incidents are “collateral” victims, or someone other than the intimate partner; one out of four collateral victims are children or youth.¹⁶
- Firearm use increases risk of collateral homicides by 71%.¹⁷

The use of firearms in abuse causes long-lasting harm to victims and survivors.

- Abusers’ firearm access is associated with a higher level of intimate partner violence overall.¹⁸
- Abuser firearm ownership is associated with severe negative health outcomes, beyond those associated with domestic violence generally.¹⁹

Federal law restricts certain respondents to final domestic violence protection orders²⁰ and certain domestic violence misdemeanants²¹ from possessing, receiving, shipping, or transporting firearms.

- Domestic violence is the second-most common reason for the background check system to block a firearm transfer, exceeded only by felony convictions.²²

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