



Guns and Violence Against Women

A Summary of Key Challenges and Solutions

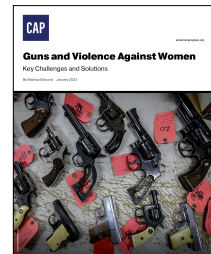
By Marissa Edmund January 28, 2022

Gun violence in the United States is a public health crisis. Every day, more than 100 people are killed with a firearm, more than 200 are nonfatally injured, and more than 1,000 are threatened with a gun.¹ There are many forms of gun violence, each affecting communities differently, and women in particular are uniquely affected.

More than 11,000 women in the United States were killed with a gun between 2015 and 2019, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.² While men suffer even higher rates of gun violence, women are often targeted for violence because of their sex and are frequently victims of people they know well. Every month, an average of 57 women are killed with a firearm by an intimate partner.³

The impact of gun violence against women goes beyond fatal encounters. A 2016 study found that nearly 1 million women alive at that time had been shot by an intimate partner, and 4.5 million women had been threatened with a firearm.⁴ Firearms have long been used as a tool of power and control to instill fear and inflict abuse on women—with women of color, people in the LGBTQ community, and women with disabilities being disproportionately affected.⁵

This summary examines five key challenges and solutions around firearms and gender-based violence in the United States.



To read the full report, see [“Guns and Violence Against Women: Key Challenges and Solutions.”](#)

5 key challenges around firearms and gender-based violence

1. **Guns used in an intimate partner context:** A significant portion of firearm violence against women occurs in an intimate partner context, with a disproportionate impact on women of color. Firearms are used in intimate partner violence more than any other weapon.⁶ According to data from the FBI’s supplemental homicide reports, from 2010 to 2019, more than 50 percent of homicides of women perpetrated by an intimate partner involved the use of a gun.⁷

2. **Gender-based violence perpetrated by strangers and acquaintances:** Gender-based violence by nonintimate partners, particularly targeting women of color, reveals the harmful consequences of easy access to firearms by misogynistic and racist individuals. In March 2021, a gunman entered three spas in Atlanta and the surrounding area and fatally shot eight people.⁸ Seven of the victims were women, and six were Asian women.⁹ In the past year, the group Stop AAPI Hate has compiled 6,600 reported incidents of discrimination or violence against the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community.¹⁰
3. **Transgender women targeted by gun-related hate crimes:** Transgender women, particularly trans women of color, experience disproportionate effects from gun-related hate crimes. In 2021, at least 45 transgender or gender-nonconforming people—most of whom were Black or transgender women of color—were shot or killed by other violent means.¹¹ Between 2017 and 2019, 74 percent of homicides of transgender people involved a gun.¹²
4. **The harmful effects of COVID-19 on gun violence against women:** Intersecting crises, including the economic recession resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, have led to spikes in gun violence against women. Early estimates found that there was an 8 percent increase in reports of domestic violence during the months immediately following stay-at-home orders in early 2020.¹³ Simultaneously, the United States saw record-high levels of gun sales, which potentially puts people in domestic violence situations at even greater risk.
5. **Political actors block gun reform and promote dangerous narratives:** Gun lobbyists and manufactures promote gender-stereotyped narratives to promote widespread gun ownership despite empirical evidence that demonstrates how dangerous the weapons really are. The presence of a gun during a domestic violence situation increases the likelihood that a death will occur by 400 percent, no matter who owns the firearm.¹⁴

Effective policy solutions

- **Disarm domestic abusers:** Close loopholes in legislation that allow dangerous people to access firearms.
- **Close the gender wage gap:** Fair and equitable pay allows survivors to leave abusive relationships and provide for their families.
- **Address online hate speech:** Misogynist and racist individuals commune in online forums that result in dangerous situations in real life.
- **Reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act with key improvements:** Each reauthorization creates an opportunity to enhance protections for survivors of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual violence, and stalking.

Endnotes

- 1 Center for American Progress analysis of U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "WISQARS," available at <https://wisqars.cdc.gov/data/explore-data/home> (last accessed December 2021); Brady: United Against Gun Violence, "Key Statistics," available at <https://www.bradyunited.org/key-statistics> (last accessed November 2021); Eugenio Weigend Vargas and Rukmani Bhatia, "No Shots Fired: Examining the Impact and Trauma Linked to the Thread of Gunfire Within the U.S." (Washington: Center for American Progress, 2020), available at <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/no-shots-fired/>.
- 2 Author's analysis of U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Fatal Injury Data Visualization Tool, Female Firearm Homicides 2015–2019," available at <https://wisqars.cdc.gov/data/explore-data/home> (last accessed December 2021).
- 3 Jacob Kaplan, "Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program Data: Supplementary Homicide Reports, 1976–2019," available at <https://doi.org/10.3886/E100699V10> (last accessed December 2021).
- 4 Susan B. Sorenson and Rebecca A. Schut, "Nonfatal Gun Use in Intimate Partner Violence: A Systematic Review of the Literature," *Trauma Violence Abuse* 19 (4) (2018): 431–442, available at <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/27630138/>.
- 5 The Educational Fund to Stop Gun Violence, "Community Gun Violence," available at <https://efsgv.org/learn/type-of-gun-violence/community-gun-violence/> (last accessed December 2021).
- 6 Susan Sorenson, "Guns in Intimate Partner Violence: Comparing Incidents by Type of Weapon," *Journal of Women's Health* 26 (3) (2017): 249–258, available at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5361762/>.
- 7 Center for American Progress analysis of Kaplan, "Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Data."
- 8 *The New York Times*, "8 Dead in Atlanta Spa Shootings, With Fears of Anti-Asian Bias," March 17, 2021, available at <https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/03/17/us/shooting-atlanta-acworth>.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Drishti Pillai, Aggie J. Yellow Horse, and Russel Jeung, "The Rising Tide of Violence and Discrimination Against Asian American and Pacific Islander Women and Girls" (San Francisco: Stop AAPI Hate, 2021), available at https://stopaapihate.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Stop-AAPI-Hate_NAPAWF_Whitepaper.pdf.
- 11 Laurel Powell, "2021 Becomes Deadliest Year on Record for Transgender and Non-Binary People," Human Rights Campaign, Press release, November 9, 2021, available at <https://www.hrc.org/press-releases/2021-becomes-deadliest-year-on-record-for-transgender-and-non-binary-people>.
- 12 Everytown for Gun Safety, "How does gun violence impact the communities you care about?," available at <https://everystat.org/#transhomicide> (last accessed November 2021).
- 13 National Commission on COVID-19 and Criminal Justice, "Impact Report: COVID-19 and Domestic Violence Trends" (Washington: 2021), available at <https://covid19.counciloncj.org/2021/02/23/impact-report-covid-19-and-domestic-violence-trends/>.
- 14 Jacquelyn C. Campbell and others, "Risk Factors for Femicide in Abusive Relationships: Results from a Multisite Case Control Study," *American Journal of Public Health* 93 (7) (2003): 1089–1097, available at <https://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/full/10.2105/AJPH.93.7.1089>.