

Gun Violence Disproportionately and Overwhelmingly Hurts Communities of Color

By Marissa Edmund June 30, 2022

Gun violence is a major problem in the United States as well as the key driver of the rise in violent crime across the nation.¹ Notably, gun violence has a disproportionate impact on racial and ethnic minorities and is highly concentrated in a relatively small number of neighborhoods that have historically been underresourced and racially segregated. This is due to a combination of weak gun laws; systemic racial inequities, including unequal access to safe housing and adequate educational and employment opportunities; and a history of disinvestment in public infrastructure and services in the communities of color most affected by gun violence.

To reduce gun violence in these communities, U.S. policymakers must complement commonsense gun laws with investments in community-based violence intervention (CVI) initiatives and policies to address root causes of gun violence.

Gun homicides are on the rise in the United States, with young Black and brown people experiencing the highest rates

- Young Black Americans (ages 15 to 34) experience the highest rates of gun homicides across all demographics.²
- Black Americans are 10 times more likely than white Americans to die by gun homicide.³
- In 2020, 12,179 Black Americans were killed with guns, compared with 7,286 white Americans:⁴
 - While Black Americans made up 12.5 percent of the U.S. population that year, they were the victims in 61 percent of all gun homicides.⁵
- Black Americans are three times more likely than white Americans to be fatally shot by police.⁶
- 60 percent of gun deaths among Hispanic and Latino people are gun homicides.⁷
- Young Hispanic Americans (ages 15 to 29) represent 4 percent of the population yet are victims in 8 percent of all gun homicides.⁸

- In 2015, half of all gun homicides took place in just 127 cities across the country:
 - Gun homicides are concentrated in a relatively small number of neighborhoods in these cities, which have historically been underresourced and racially segregated.⁹

Women of color are more likely than their white counterparts to be shot and killed with firearms

- Black women are twice as likely as white women to be fatally shot by an intimate partner.¹⁰
- American Indian and Alaska Native women are killed by intimate partners at a rate of 4.3 per 100,000, compared with 1.5 per 100,000 for white women.¹¹
- Guns are used in more than half of all homicides of women and are disproportionately used against Black women.¹²
- Even when firearms are not used to kill or injure, they are used to threaten women at alarming rates:
 - 4.5 million women alive today have reported being threatened with a firearm.¹³

Nonfatal gun violence has a lasting impact on individuals and communities

- For every gun homicide there are more than two nonfatal gun shootings.¹⁴
- From 2009 to 2018, the rate of gun-related assaults against Black and Hispanic Americans was 208.9 and 128.7, respectively, per 100,000, compared with 90.5 per 100,000 for white Americans.¹⁵
- Nine in 10 survivors of gun violence report experiencing trauma from their incident.¹⁶

Solutions: In addition to stronger, commonsense gun laws, policymakers must address systemic racial inequities.

- Policymakers should dismantle racist policies in policing, access to housing, education, and employment in order to address root causes of gun violence.¹⁷
- The country must invest in community violence intervention (CVI) programs:
 - CVIs focus on partnerships with those most affected by gun violence, government, and community stakeholders to bring community-specific solutions to gun violence.¹⁸
- Domestic abusers must be prevented from accessing firearms:
 - Gaps in legislation, such as the “dating partner loophole,” allow some abusers to access firearms even if they have been convicted of a domestic violence crime.¹⁹
 - In June 2022, President Joe Biden signed into law the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act, a gun violence prevention package that included some, but not all, priorities to curb gun violence across the country. This package partially closed the dating partner loophole by prohibiting some dating partners convicted of domestic violence misdemeanors from owning or

purchasing a firearm. However, dating partners who are issued final protective orders can still possess firearms.²⁰

- Women in communities of color have unique needs and challenges that prevent them from both seeking help and accessing services. Solutions should, therefore, be driven by the needs of this group.

Conclusion

Communities of color disproportionately bear the brunt of gun violence in the United States. Commonsense gun laws as well as direct investments in the communities that are most affected by gun violence are crucial to ending gun violence and saving lives.

Endnotes

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- 3 Everytown for Gun Safety, "Impact of Gun Violence on Black Americans," available at <https://www.everytown.org/issues/gun-violence-black-americans/> (last accessed June 2022).
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- 8 CAP Criminal Justice Reform team and CAP Gun Violence Prevention team, "Frequently Asked Questions About Community-Based Violence Intervention Programs" (Washington: 2022), available at <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/frequently-asked-questions-about-community-based-violence-intervention-programs/>.
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- 12 Ibid.
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- 15 Eugenio Weigend Vargas and Rukmani Bhatia, "No Shots Fired: Examining the Impact and Trauma Linked to the Threat of Gunfire Within the U.S." (Washington: 2020), available at <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/no-shots-fired/>.
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