



Violence Policy Center

[Index](#)[Firearm Laws](#)[Press Releases](#)[Facts & Stats](#)[Publications](#)[Links](#)[Home](#)[About VPC](#)

Facts on Firearms and Domestic Violence

1. In 2000, in homicides where the weapon was known, 50 percent (1,342 of 2,701) of female homicide victims were killed with a firearm. Of those female firearm homicides, 1,009 women (75 percent) were killed with a handgun.
2. More than five times as many women were murdered by an intimate acquaintance (605) than by a stranger (113) in the year 2000. Additionally, while firearm homicides involving male victims were mostly *intra*-gender, 95 percent of *female* firearm homicide victims were murdered by a male.
3. Domestic violence against women is a disturbingly common occurrence in the United States. Estimates from the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) indicate that from 1993 to 1998, women were victims of violent crimes by their intimate partners an average of more than 935,000 times a year. During this period, intimate-partner violence comprised 22 percent of all violent crimes against women. Although firearms are used in a relatively small percentage of domestic violence incidents, when a firearm *is* present, domestic violence can and all too often does turn into domestic homicide. Congress, recognizing the unique and deadly role firearms play in domestic violence passed the Protective Order Gun Ban in 1994. The law prohibits gun possession by a person against whom there is a restraining or protective order for domestic violence. In 1996, Congress passed the Domestic Violence Misdemeanor Gun Ban, which prohibits anyone convicted of a misdemeanor crime of domestic violence or child abuse from purchasing or possessing a gun.
4. A 1997 study that examined the risk factors for violent death for women in the home found that when there were one or more guns in the home, the risk of suicide among women increased nearly five times and the risk of homicide increased more than three times. The increased risk of homicide associated with firearms was attributable to homicides at the hands of a spouse, intimate acquaintance, or close relative.
5. An analysis of female domestic homicides (a woman murdered by a spouse, intimate acquaintance, or close relative) showed that prior domestic violence in the household made a woman *14.6 times* more likely, and having one or more guns in the home made a woman *7.2 times* more likely, to be the victim of such a homicide.
6. The circumstances of firearms violence differ significantly between men and women. Compared to a man, a woman is far more likely to be killed by her spouse, an intimate acquaintance, or a family member than murdered by a stranger or an unidentified intruder. A 1976 to 1987 analysis of Federal Bureau of Investigation data revealed that more than twice as many women were shot and killed by their husbands or intimate acquaintances than were murdered by strangers using firearms, knives, or any other means.
7. Between 1976 and 1996, 65 percent of the male and female victims of intimate partner homicides were killed with a firearm. And while rates of intimate partner homicide have been declining, the ratio of female-to-male victims has risen. In other words, when an intimate-partner homicide occurs, it is

increasingly likely that a woman is the victim rather than a man.

8. Having a gun in the home makes it three times more likely that you or someone you care about will be murdered by a family member or intimate partner.
9. A firearm in the home may be a key factor in the escalation of nonfatal spousal abuse to homicide. In a study of family and intimate assaults for the city of Atlanta, Georgia, in 1984, firearm-associated family and intimate assaults were 12 times more likely to result in death than non-firearm associated assaults between family and intimates.
10. The effects of firearm-related domestic violence last long beyond the actual crime. In a study on child witnesses of marital violence, the authors noted that children who observed incidents of domestic violence involving the use or threat of a firearm exhibited higher levels of behavior problems than children who did not.

Endnotes

1. Data from the 2000 FBI Supplementary Homicide Report. Analysis performed by the Violence Policy Center.
2. Data from the 2000 FBI Supplementary Homicide Report. Analysis performed by the Violence Policy Center.
3. Violence Policy Center, *When Men Murder Women: An Analysis of 1999 Homicide Data*, October 2001, p. 1.
4. James E. Bailey, MD, MPH, et al., "Risk Factors for Violence Death of Women in the Home," *Archives of Internal Medicine* 157, no. 7 (1997): 777-782.
5. James E. Bailey, MD, MPH, et al., "Risk Factors for Violence Death of Women in the Home," *Archives of Internal Medicine* 157, no. 7 (1997): 777-782.
6. Arthur Kellermann, MD, MPH, et al., "Men, Women, and Murder: Gender-Specific Differences in Rates of Fatal Violence and Victimization," *Journal of Trauma* 33, (July 1992): 1-5.
7. Lawrence A. Greenfeld et al., "Violence by Intimates: An Analysis of Data on Crimes by Current or Former Spouses, Boyfriends, and Girlfriends," *Bureau of Justice Statistics Factbook* (March 1998): 10.
8. Arthur Kellermann, MD, MPH, et al., "Gun Ownership as a Risk Factor for Homicide in the Home," *New England Journal of Medicine* 329, no. 15 (1993): 1084-1091.
9. Linda Saltzman, PhD, et al., "Weapon Involvement and Injury Outcomes in Family and Intimate Assaults," *JAMA* 267, no. 22 (1992): 3043-3047.
10. Arthur Kellermann, MD, MPH, et al., "Firearms and Family Violence," *Emergency Medicine Clinics of North America* 17 (August 1999): 699-716, citing Ernest N. Jouriles et al., "Knives, Guns, and Interparent Violence: Relations with Child Behavior Problems," *Journal of Family Psychology* 12, no. 2 (1998): 178-194.