YWCA is committed to ensuring that communities are safe places for women and girls to thrive. As headlines and research make clear, however, gun violence is a major threat to their health and safety.

BACKGROUND

Women’s experiences of gun violence are inextricably linked to domestic violence.

- Some 4.5 million women in the U.S. have been threatened with a gun by an intimate partner,i and nearly 1 million women alive today have been shot, or shot at, by an intimate partner.ii
- In an average month, 50 women in the U.S. are shot to death by intimate partners, and many more are injured.iii
- The presence of a gun in a domestic violence situation makes it five times more likely that a woman will be killed.iv
- States with laws that prohibit people with domestic violence restraining orders from possessing a gun have a 14% lower rate of intimate partner homicide by firearm.v

Gun violence is particularly dangerous for women of color.

- Women of color are nearly three times as likely to be murdered with a gun than white women.vi
- Black women are shot and killed by a husband or intimate partner three times more often than by male strangers, and most often during the course of an argument.vii
- Transgender women of color face an even higher increased risk of gun violence: transgender women are four times more likely to experience gun violence than cisgender women, and nearly 85% of transgender victims are women of color.viii

There are significant connections between domestic violence and mass shootings.

- Most mass shootings in the U.S. — those in which four or more individuals are killed — are related to domestic violence: shooters killed intimate partners or other family members in at least 54% of mass shootings.ix
- While women make up only 15% of all gun violence, they make up 50% of victims in mass shootings.x
- While most mass shootings occur in the home, the shooters in one-third of the 46 mass shootings that took place entirely in public between 2009 and 2016 had a history of violence against women.xi
- In 42% of mass shootings between 2009 and 2016, the shooter exhibited warning signs that they posed a danger to themselves or others, and one-third of mass shooters were prohibited from possessing a firearm.xii
ADVOCACY RESPONSES THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE

To decrease firearm-related homicides of women and girls, YWCA USA endorses the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2021 (H.R. 1620), which would:

- Keep guns out of the hands of perpetrators of domestic violence, stalking, and other interpersonal violence;
- Expand existing law that prohibits those who are convicted of a domestic violence misdemeanor from obtaining a firearm to include those convicted of dating violence and stalking;
- Ensure all abusers relinquish firearms once prohibited;
- Notify local law enforcement when a prohibited person fails a background check since this could indicate an escalation in violence;
- Clarify that all local/municipal laws that prohibit abusers from possessing firearms are treated like federal, state, and tribal laws; and
- Allow local law enforcement to be cross-deputized with the ATF and use the full weight of the federal government to keep communities safe from domestic violence homicide.

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