

PREVENTING GUN VIOLENCE

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. From the hallways of Stoneman Douglas High School and Sandy Hook Elementary, to the social venues of the Las Vegas country music festival and the Pulse nightclub, to homes and communities across the country, women experience unacceptably high levels of gun violence that leave them at heightened risk of harm and death.

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}

Gun violence is particularly dangerous for women of color, who are nearly three times as likely to be murdered with a gun than white women.^v 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.^{vi} 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 percent of transgender victims are women of color.^{vii}

The connections between domestic violence and mass shootings are alarming. 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 percent of mass shootings.^{viii} While women make up only 15 percent of all gun violence, they make up 50 percent of victims in mass shootings, largely due to the correlation between domestic violence and mass shootings.^{ix} Even when strangers are targeted instead of family members, there are connections between mass shootings and domestic violence: 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.^x Moreover, in 42 percent 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.^{xi}

The significant links between mass shootings and domestic violence, and the disparate impacts of gun violence on women of color, are too often overlooked in the public narrative about gun violence. So, too, are the impacts of school shootings on girls of color. Like all students, youth of color face the increasing risk of school shootings. Frequently, when young people are the shooters in school settings, they have obtained firearms at home, likely because an adult did not store it locked and unloaded.^{xii} However, it is primarily students of color who face the negative impacts of heightened school

surveillance and security measures that have been implemented in response to school shootings. Such measures have not been applied equally across all schools, and schools with a preponderance of students of color are more likely to adopt strict surveillance and security measures which can further criminalize girls of color who already experience disproportionate punishment in school.^{xiii}

YWCA USA POSITION

YWCA believes that all women and girls deserve to live free from the threat of gun violence. To this end, we support systemic and structural policy changes that focus attention and resources on the places, spaces, and contexts in which women and girls--particularly women and girls of color-- experience significant threats from gun violence: in their homes, as victims and survivors of intimate partner violence; in mass shootings, which are most often perpetrated by those with a history of domestic violence; and at school, where students of color both face the threat of school shootings and bear the brunt of harsh school surveillance and security measures.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

To decrease gun violence for women and girls, particularly women and girls of color, **YWCA USA endorses the following policy responses:**

- **Keep guns out of the hands of perpetrators of domestic violence, stalking, and other interpersonal violence**
 - Prohibit those convicted of domestic violence and stalking from obtaining firearms, as well as those subject to domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking restraining orders
 - Ensure that abusers and stalkers subject to a restraining order relinquish all firearms once they are prohibited
 - Establish mandatory licensing requirements, so that law enforcement and courts can more effectively identify when abusers and stalkers have firearms that should be confiscated
 - Oppose “concealed carry reciprocity” legislation, which would enable abusers to carry firearms across state lines into states that prohibit “concealed carry”
- **Eliminate access to automatic weapons and high capacity ammunition**
 - Ban the sale and possession of assault weapons, high capacity gun magazines (those with a capacity of more than 10 bullets), and bump stocks
 - More tightly enforcing laws on straw purchases of weapons, and limits on how many guns can be purchased in a month
- **Protect students from the danger of school shootings**
 - Mandate “safe storage” requirements such as trigger locks, and requiring that guns and ammunition be stored separately, especially when children are in the house
 - Ban the sale of firearms to people under the age of 21

- Focus responses to school shootings on fostering positive school climate, instead of arming teachers, expanding police presence, or other attempts to fortify schools
 - Increase the number and availability of counselors and other specialized support personnel in schools
 - Expand the availability of restorative practices in schools to build healthy communities, decrease antisocial behavior, repair harm and restore relationships
- Hold adults responsible for negligently storing firearms
- **Strengthen methods for screening and removing firearms from individuals who pose a significant risk of danger to others**
 - Establish and enforce gun violence restraining orders – “Red Flag Restraining Orders” / “Extreme Risk Protective Orders”
 - Improve background checks
 - Require universal background checks for all gun sales
 - Ensure all necessary records are updated in the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS)
 - Hold states and federal agencies accountable for accurately reporting records to the NICS database
 - Increase training and technical assistance to state and local jurisdictions to improve firearm removal and storage
 - Carefully distinguish between individuals who are mentally unwell or experiencing a crisis and may pose a safety threat, and those who are mentally ill yet do not pose any increased risk of violence
 - Ensure that accessible, high quality, culturally competent mental health treatment is provided in communities
- **Remove legislative restrictions on gun data collection and sharing, including:**
 - The Dickey Amendment, which currently prohibits research by the Centers for Disease Control
 - The Tiahrt Amendment, which requires the FBI to destroy all approved gun purchaser records within 24 hours and prohibits the National Tracing Center of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives from releasing information from its firearms trace database to anyone other than a law enforcement agency or prosecutor in connection with a criminal investigation, and thereby precludes gun trace data from being used in academic research of gun use or utilized in civil litigation against gun dealers or manufacturers.

YWCA USA opposes policy responses that further stigmatize individuals with mental health conditions, or that expand police presence in schools and the criminalization of youth of color, including proposals to arm teachers with firearms and to “fortify,” “harden” or “militarize” school facilities.

ⁱ Sorenson, S. B., & Schut, R. A. (2016). Nonfatal Gun Use in Intimate Partner Violence A Systematic Review of the Literature. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 1524838016668589

ⁱⁱ Federal Bureau of Investigation, Supplementary Homicide Reports, 2009-13 and Sorenson, S. B., & Schut, R. A. (2016). Nonfatal Gun Use in Intimate Partner Violence A Systematic Review of the Literature. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 1524838016668589

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^v Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "Fatal Injury Reports, National, Regional and State, 1981-2016." Retrieved 28 February 2018 from <https://webappa.cdc.gov/sasweb/ncipc/mortrate.html>.

^{vi} Violence Policy Center. "When Men Murder Women: An Analysis of 2014 Homicide Data." Retrieved 6 March 2018 from <http://www.vpc.org/studies/wmmw2016.pdf>.

^{vii} McBath, Lucy. "It's Time to Talk About Gun Violence, Hate and Protecting the Transgender Community."

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^{viii} Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund. "Mass Shootings in the United States: 2009 – 2016." Retrieved 6 March 2018 from <https://everytownresearch.org/reports/mass-shootings-analysis/>.

^{ix} Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund. "The Real Story of Mass Shootings in America." Retrieved 28 February 2018 from <https://everytownresearch.org/mass-shootings/>.

^x Time Magazine. "The Troubling Link Between Domestic Violence and Mass Shooters." Retrieved 6 March 2018 from <http://time.com/5016731/link-between-domestic-violence-mass-shooters/>.

^{xi} Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund. "Mass Shootings in the United States: 2009 – 2016." Retrieved 6 March 2018 from <https://everytownresearch.org/reports/mass-shootings-analysis/>.

^{xii} Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund. "Analysis of School Shootings." Retrieved 6 March 2018 from <https://everytownresearch.org/reports/analysis-of-school-shootings/>.

^{xiii} Nance, Jason P. "Student Surveillance, Racial Inequalities, and Implicit Racial Bias." *66 Emory Law Journal* 765 (2017). Retrieved 28 February 2018 from https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2830885.