Guns and Domestic Violence

**Bottom Line:** When it comes to gun violence against women, the United States is the most dangerous country in the developed world. Domestic violence affects millions of women across the country, and guns in the hands of domestic abusers can turn abuse into murder. Indeed, the presence of a gun in a domestic violence situation makes it five times more likely that the woman will be killed. And the deadly mix of guns and domestic violence is exacerbated by America’s weak gun laws: women in the U.S. are 16 times more likely to be shot and killed than are women in other developed nations.

Common sense laws that keep guns out of the hands of domestic abusers—by requiring background checks for all gun sales and ensuring that prohibited abusers relinquish guns in their possession—just make sense. And for victims of domestic abuse, it's a matter of life and death.

- **Guns and domestic violence are a deadly—and all too common—combination.**
  - The presence of a gun in a domestic violence situation makes it **five times more likely** that a woman will be killed.\(^1\)
  - Women in the U.S. are **16 times more likely** to be killed with a gun than women in other high-income countries, making this country the most dangerous in the developed world when it comes to gun violence against women.\(^2\) Every year American women suffer from **5.3 million incidents of intimate partner violence.**\(^3\)
  - In an average month, **50 American women are shot to death** by intimate partners,\(^4\) and many more are injured. Nearly **1 million women alive today have been shot, or shot at,** by an intimate partner.\(^5\)

- **Abusers use guns to threaten and control their victims, even if they never pull the trigger.**
  - About **4.5 million American women** alive today have been threatened with a gun by an intimate partner.\(^6\)

- **Most mass shootings in the U.S. are related to domestic or family violence.**
  - Everytown’s analysis of mass shootings from 2009 to 2016 shows that **in 54 percent of mass shootings, the shooters killed intimate partners** or other family members.\(^7\)

- **The physical and emotional toll of domestic violence also brings an economic cost.**
  - Medical, mental health and loss of productivity costs related to domestic violence are estimated at **over $8 billion each year.**\(^8\) That figure doesn't even include other costs like legal fees, criminal justice costs, or mental health care for children affected by violence.
  - Domestic violence leads to **13.5 million days of lost work** each year.\(^9\)

- **In many states, gun laws leave victims of domestic abuse unprotected.**
  - **One in seven unlawful gun buyers stopped by a federal background check is a domestic abuser.**\(^10\) Since its inception in 1998, the federal criminal background check system (NICS) has blocked more than 300,000 gun sales to domestic abusers.\(^11\)
  - However, federal law only requires background checks for gun sales at licensed dealers. While 19 states and Washington D.C. go further and require checks on all handgun sales, in
all other states **abusers can avoid background checks by buying guns from unlicensed sellers** they meet online or at gun shows.

- While federal law prohibits gun possession by certain domestic abusers, it is up to the states to make sure that prohibited domestic abusers actually relinquish their firearms. **Only 15 states require abusers subject to final domestic violence restraining orders to turn in their guns.**  

☐ **Laws designed to keep guns out of the hands of domestic abusers save lives.**

- State laws that prohibit individuals subject to DV-related restraining orders from possessing firearms and also require them to relinquish any firearms in their possession are associated with a 10% lower rate of total intimate partner homicide and a 14% lower rate of intimate partner firearm homicide.  

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12. CA, CO, CT, HI, IA, IL, MA, MD, MN, NC, NH, NY, TN, WA, and WI.