

Summary of Trauma and Gun Violence Among LGBTQIA+ Communities

From 2017 to 2022, there were 222 homicides of transgender or gender non-conforming people, with 2021 standing out as a particularly deadly year.¹ During this period, 74 percent of the trans people killed were killed with a gun. To better understand the breadth and depth of trauma experienced by survivors of gun violence including LGBTQ+ members, Everytown for Gun Safety conducted 16 focus groups with 103 survivors of gun violence with diverse identities that have not been researched extensively.² A total of 19 LGBTQ+ community members shared their vast experiences of gun violence including surviving intimate partner violence with a firearm, hate crimes, attempted suicide with a gun, and police violence. Others shared experiences of the death of loved ones in mass shootings and instances of unintentional firearm discharge.

“[It is like] a death by a thousand cuts when you are dealing with fighting to just be your authentic self. That in of itself is traumatic, when you're seeing politicians legislating against your love, your families, your friends... and then when you have the added layer of gun violence on top of it, it gets incredibly overwhelming.”

—LGBTQ+ survivor whose friend was shot and killed in a hate-motivated mass shooting

Key Findings

• **Feeling Unsafe**

Participants discussed concerns about anti-LGBTQ+ motivated gun violence and persistent gun violence in the news which leads to feelings of retraumatization and a constant state of fear and paranoia. To avoid retraumatization and gain a sense of safety, LGBTQ+ participants avoid public spaces and develop hypervigilance as a coping mechanism.

• **Ripple Effect of Trauma in the LGBTQ+ Community**

Participants shared their experiences of collective trauma in the aftermath of an event that impacts the LGBTQ+ community, such as mass shootings, witnessing gun violence in the media, and police violence. As a result, trauma extends beyond geography to communities that share the same identities as the survivors and victims of gun violence.

• **Judgment and Bias**

LGBTQ+ members share their challenges in navigating judgment from others about their experience or the ways in which they cope with the event. They received negative responses due to the type of incident and their identity.

• **Mental Health Services and Peer Support**

Access to mental health services and peer support was instrumental in LGBTQ+ survivors' path to recovery and healing from gun violence trauma. Those who had access to mental health services and peer support stated that they benefited by experiencing positive growth and processing the incident with people who share similar experiences of gun violence. However, many shared that trauma-informed care was not available to cope with their trauma.

• **Activism**

Many LGBTQ+ participants joined or created chapters of Moms Demand Action, volunteered in gun violence prevention organizations, created careers in advocacy, and organized LGBTQ+ support groups.

Solutions and Recommendations

Included in the full report *Beyond Measure: Gun Violence Trauma* are eight solutions and recommendations for action. The first recommendation is to educate workers across systems on the impact of trauma with a culturally responsive lens. Expanding the Trauma Recovery Center model and building on investments in trauma awareness and mental health services in the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act (BSCA) and President Biden's Executive Order 14092 will continue necessary progress that has begun. Congress must pass the Everytown-endorsed bipartisan Resources for Victims of Gun Violence Act (H.R. 1560 / S. 556), and continue to expand access to trauma-informed peer support programming like Everytown's SurvivorsConnect program. Efforts must be increased to solve gun crimes and address police violence. Research on the needs and experiences of survivors of gun violence is critical to inform advocacy and services. Finally, expanding technical assistance programs for community violence interruption (CVI) practitioners, like the work of the Roca Impact Institute, will disrupt cycles of trauma and violence.

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1. Everytown for Gun Safety, Transgender Homicide Tracker, six-year count: 2017–2022.
 2. Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, "Beyond Measure: Gun Violence Trauma," May 2023, <https://everytownresearch.org/beyond-measure>

