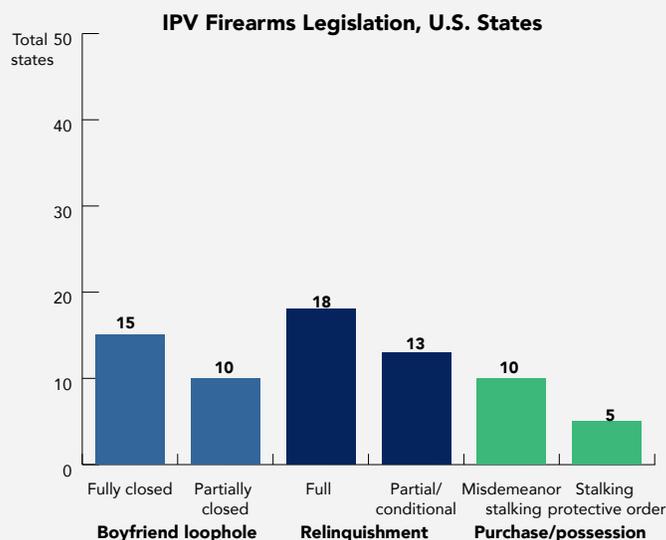


Intimate partner violence and guns are a dangerous mix

The great majority (80%) of intimate partner violence incidents involving a firearm are male-on-female.¹ In the U.S., an estimated 4.5 million women report having been threatened with a gun by an intimate partner, and nearly 1 million have had a partner who used a gun against them.² In 2017, 926 of the 1,527 women (61%) murdered by a partner were killed with a gun (61%), and, overall, gun-related intimate partner homicides increased by 26% from 2010 to 2017.³ Robust policies need to be introduced and expanded to protect women from abusive men with firearms.



Gender has substantial practical implications for keeping women safe from abusers with firearms. Men demonstrate substantially less support than women for firearm removal following a DV incident.⁴ Those making decisions about these crucial legal protections (legislators, judges, law enforcement officers) are overwhelmingly male. Placing more leaders, especially women, who make evidence-based policy decisions might help break down these barriers.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Several policy solutions that, when implemented effectively and coupled with robust data collection, can be useful:

Close the “boyfriend loophole”

Current federal law regarding DV is limited. It restricts individuals from purchasing and possessing a firearm only if they have been convicted of a domestic violence (DV) misdemeanor or are under a DV restraining order if the victim is or was the perpetrator’s spouse, cohabitant, or they had a child together. Notably left out are casual and non-cohabitating dating partners, even though nearly half of intimate partner homicides are perpetrated by an unmarried partner.⁵ Demographic implications are huge: Black women are four times more likely than white women to be murdered by an unmarried partner.⁶ In response, 19 states and the District of Columbia have legislation prohibiting dating partners convicted of DV from having a gun.⁷

Strengthen relinquishment requirements

Although no federal laws are in place, many states require persons who have been convicted of a DV crime or are under a DV restraining order to relinquish their firearms. This requirement should be implemented at the federal level and include providing proof of surrender. States with proof of relinquishment laws have fewer intimate partner gun homicides.⁸ Requiring law enforcement to remove firearms at the scene of a DV incident, as 14 states do,⁷ can help.

Prohibit stalkers from having access to guns

Stalking can be a powerful predictor of lethality: 25% of abused women murdered by an intimate partner were stalked first, and 6% of women who were abused but not murdered by their partner report being stalked.⁹ Federal law, however, does not restrict firearms from individuals convicted of misdemeanor stalking.

The Violence Against Women Act’s (VAWA) reauthorization, which would close both the boyfriend and stalking loopholes, has been caught in Congressional gridlock since April 2018.

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