



REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS & HEALTH

IF YOU CARE ABOUT ENDING GUN VIOLENCE, YOU SHOULD CARE ABOUT REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE

Reproductive justice requires that people be able to live and raise their families in safe, healthy communities. Yet, the threat of gun violence makes this impossible for many people. Over 33,000 people are killed by gun violence each year in the U.S.¹ Fear of gun violence leaves many parents feeling helpless and unable to protect their children. As one young mother living in the Bronx said about incidents of gun violence around the country, “As a mother of three kids, I’m afraid of their future. I feel like no matter how I raise them and teach them to make the right decisions, I can’t protect them. . . .”²

Gun violence threatens health and safety and can undermine people’s feelings of community and trust. According to the American Medical Association, gun violence has become a public health crisis.³ The burdens of this crisis, though, are not spread equally across our society. Despite being less likely to own guns,⁴ people of color are more likely to experience gun violence.⁵ Gun violence and the fear of gun violence keep people from being able to make decisions about their lives and futures with dignity and autonomy. Reproductive justice must work to advance policies that address the causes of gun violence and support viable solutions to ensure that people in all communities can live and raise their families in safe environments, free from the fear of violence.

Guns Undermine Safety in the Community

The mere presence of guns makes communities less safe and can increase the risk, not only of gun violence, but other forms of violence as well.⁶ States with higher rates of gun

ownership have higher rates of gun homicides.⁷ And so called “stand your ground” laws, which make it harder to prosecute people who claim they used force in self-defense, have actually increased homicides in the states where they have been implemented.⁸

Gun violence presents particular risks for women. Overall, women in the U.S. are 11 times more likely to be shot and killed than women in other similar countries.⁹ And the risk of homicide for women that experience domestic violence rises astronomically – by 500 percent – when the perpetrator of domestic violence has access to a gun.¹⁰

The dangers of gun violence fall most heavily on communities of color.¹¹ For example, 23 percent of Black young adults and 15 percent of Latino/a young adults report they have personally experienced gun violence in the past year, compared with only eight percent of white young adults.¹² Gun violence is the leading cause of death for young Black men and boys ages 15-24.¹³ In fact, more young Black men and boys die from gun-related homicides than from the next nine leading causes of death combined.¹⁴

Stereotypes and implicit bias can also play a role in increasing gun violence. People may unconsciously fear certain racial/ethnic groups,¹⁵ causing them to perceive danger even when there is no risk.¹⁶ Studies have found that people will consistently shoot at images of Black men more quickly than they will shoot at images of white men and are more likely to shoot unarmed Black men than unarmed white men.¹⁷

When combined with the presence of a gun, implicit bias can contribute to turning an encounter deadly. Theodore Wafer, a 54 year-old white man, shot and killed Renisha McBride, a 19 year-old Black woman, when she knocked on his door, seeking help after a car accident.¹⁸ Michael Dunn, a 47 year-old white man, shot 10 rounds into a car of four Black teenagers, killing 17 year-old Jordan Davis, all because Dunn objected to the volume of the music playing from the boys’ car.¹⁹



Furthermore, studies have shown that police officers are not immune to the effects of implicit bias.²⁰ But unlike most people, their job entails making quick decisions that can have deadly consequences. So far in 2016, 832 people have been fatally shot by police.²¹ In 2015, police killed 1,134 Black men in the United States.²² About 25 percent of those men were unarmed, compared to 17 percent of white men who were killed by police.²³ These police shootings can erode any sense of community and breed distrust. A recent survey shows that less than half (44 percent) of Black young adults trust the police compared with 60 percent of Latino/a young adults, and 72 percent of white young adults.²⁴ Bias may also prevent a victim from receiving justice because people claiming self-defense in a shooting are less likely to be convicted if they killed a person of color.²⁵

Guns Undermine Safety in the Home

The presence of a gun not only makes communities less safe, it makes homes less safe, as well. People with a gun in the home are more likely to be victims of a homicide.²⁶ The presence of a gun in the home also raises the risk of unintentional death, particularly for young children.²⁷ Children die at a rate of one every other day from unintentional firearm deaths – shot either by themselves, an adult, or another child.²⁸ And 89 percent of these shootings happen in the home.²⁹ For example, in 2016, Bryson Mees-Hernandez was staying with his two younger sisters at his grandparents' home when he found a gun his grandmother had stored under her bed for protection. While handling the gun, Bryson unintentionally shot himself and died later in the hospital.³⁰

Further, the mere presence of a gun makes it more likely someone will successfully commit suicide, even among people who don't have a history of mental illness.³¹ Most people who start a suicide attempt change their minds and abandon the attempt mid-way.³² But an accessible gun in the home makes it easy for a person to make an impulsive decision, without adequate time to reconsider. About 83 percent of suicide attempts with a firearm are fatal, while other attempt methods – like drug overdose and cutting – have fatality rates below two percent.³³

Families and Their Communities Need Gun Safety Measures

After a high-profile shooting in Orlando in June 2016, 92 percent of people in one survey stated that they supported expanded background checks for firearm purchases.³⁴ And a recent survey shows that Black and Latino/a young adults overwhelmingly support measures to reduce gun violence – such as a nationwide ban on semi-automatic weapons and high-capacity magazines – and at least 50 percent of white young adults support these measures.³⁵ Yet too often, politicians have failed to pass even the most popular gun safety legislation. For example, although legislation requiring background checks for all firearm purchases is the most popular gun safety measure, only eight states have passed these laws.³⁶ And the federal government has repeatedly failed to pass this legislation.³⁷ At the same time, federal law prohibits the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) from studying the causes of gun violence. Fourteen states have even passed or introduced laws that prohibit doctors from talking to their patients about gun safety.³⁸

Meanwhile, 306 people are shot every day in the United States.³⁹ Forty-eight of those people are children and teens.⁴⁰ The gun violence epidemic prevents people from having and raising families in safe and healthy environments. All communities need policies and measures that open the dialogue about gun violence as a reproductive justice issue and address real causes and solutions.

How You Can Support Gun Safety and Reproductive Justice

- Support measures to reduce gun violence such as:
 - o Restrictions on semi-automatic weapons and high-capacity magazines,
 - o Safe storage practices, and
 - o Criminal background checks for all gun sales.
- Encourage an open dialogue about gun violence and gun safety.

1 Gun deaths according to U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data, available at <https://wonder.cdc.gov/ucd-icd10.html> (retrieved Nov. 3, 2016).

2 LIVING FOR 32, *Speak Out Quotes and Testimonials*, <http://livingfor32.com/speak-up-take-action/> (last visited Nov. 16, 2016) (quote of Marcia Holguin).

3 Alexandra Sifferlin, *American Medical Association Declares Gun Violence a Public Health Crisis*, TIME (June 14, 2016), available at <http://time.com/4368874/american-medical-association-declares-gun-violence-a-public-health-crisis/>.

4 Rich Morin, *The Demographics and Politics of Gun-Owning Households*, PEW RESEARCH CENTER, July 15, 2014, available at <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/07/15/the-demographics-and-politics-of-gun-owning-households/>.

5 CATHY J. COHEN ET AL., GUN VIOLENCE, POLICING, AND YOUNG COMMUNITIES OF COLOR 1 (July 2016), available at <http://raceandpolicing.issuelab.org/resources/25201/25201.pdf>.

6 David Hemenway et al., *Is an Armed Society A Polite Society? Guns and Road Rage*, 38 ACCIDENT ANALYSIS & PREVENTION 687 (July 2006), available at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/16434012>; Charles D. Phillips et al., *When Concealed Handgun Licensees Break Bad: Criminal Convictions of Concealed Handgun Licensees in Texas, 2001-2009*, 103 AM. J. PUBLIC HEALTH 86 (Jan. 2013), available at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3518334/>.



- 7 Michael Siegel et al., *The Relationship Between Gun Ownership and Firearm Homicide Rates in the United States, 1981–2010*, 103 AM. J. PUBLIC HEALTH 2098 (Nov. 2013), available at <http://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/abs/10.2105/AJPH.2013.301409?journalCode=ajph&>.
- 8 Joe Palazzolo, *Study Says ‘Stand Your Ground’ Laws Increase Homicides* (June 11, 2012), available at <http://blogs.wsj.com/law/2012/06/11/study-says-stand-your-ground-laws-increase-homicides/?mod=e2tw>; Adam Weinstein, *How the NRA and Its Allies Helped Spread a Radical Gun Law Nationwide* (June 7, 2012), available at <http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/06/nra-alec-stand-your-ground?page=11>.
- 9 EVERYTOWN FOR GUN SAFETY, *Domestic Violence*, <http://everytown.org/issue/domestic-violence/> (last visited Nov. 17, 2016).
- 10 THE NATIONAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOTLINE, *Firearms and Domestic Violence*, <http://www.thehotline.org/resources/firearms-dv/> (last visited Nov. 17, 2016).
- 11 See CATHY J. COEHN ET AL., *supra* note 5.
- 12 *Id.*
- 13 Louis Jacobson, *Hillary Clinton Correct That Gun Deaths For Young Black Males Outpace Next 9 Causes Combined* (Sept. 26, 2016), <http://www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter/statements/2016/sep/26/hillary-clinton/hillary-clinton-correct-gun-deaths-young-black-mal/> (calculated using CDC data, <https://wonder.cdc.gov/ucd-icd10.html>).
- 14 *Id.*
- 15 PAMELA M. CASEY ET AL., HELPING COURTS ADDRESS IMPLICIT BIAS, NATIONAL CENTER FOR STATE COURTS B-2 (2012), available at http://www.ncsc.org/-/media/Files/PDF/Topics/Gender%20and%20Racial%20Fairness/IB_report_033012.ashx.
- 16 See, e.g., AM. PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOC., *Black Boys Viewed as Older, Less Innocent Than Whites, Research Finds* (Mar. 6, 2014), <http://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2014/03/black-boys-older.aspx>. TYLER RENY & SYLVIA MANZANO, THE NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF MASS MEDIA STEREOTYPES OF LATINOS AND IMMIGRANTS 199, available at http://tylerreny.github.io/pdf/pubs/reny_manzano_stereotypes_2016.pdf.
- 17 Laura Geggel, *How Racism Persists: Unconscious Bias May Play a Role* (July 8, 2016), <http://www.livescience.com/55337-unconscious-racial-bias.html>.
- 18 Nicole Flatow, *Homeowner Who Shot And Killed A Girl On His Porch Found Guilty Of Murder* (Aug. 7, 2014), <https://thinkprogress.org/homeowner-who-shot-and-killed-a-girl-on-his-porch-found-guilty-of-murder-cdd68a9a9b32#.qr16zcdtp>.
- 19 Julia Dahl, *“Loud Music” Shooter Michael Dunn Gets Life In Prison*, CBS NEWS (Oct. 17, 2014), available at <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/michael-dunn-loud-music-shooter-gets-life-in-prison/>.
- 20 Denise Cummins, *Are Police Shootings Racially Biased?*, PBS NEWSHOUR (JULY 13, 2016), <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/updates/police-shootings-racially-biased/>.
- 21 THE WASHINGTON POST, *Fatal Force*, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/national/police-shootings-2016/> (retrieved Nov. 14, 2016).
- 22 Jon Swaine et al., *Young Black Men Killed By US Police At Highest Rate In Year Of 1,134 Deaths*, THE GUARDIAN (Dec. 31, 2015), <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/dec/31/the-counted-police-killings-2015-young-black-men>.
- 23 *Id.*
- 24 CATHY J. COHEN ET AL., *supra* note 5, at 7.
- 25 Nicole Ackermann et al., *Race, Law, and Health: Examination of ‘Stand Your Ground’ and Defendant Convictions In Florida*, 142 SOCIAL SCIENCE & MEDICINE 194 (Oct. 2015), available at <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0277953615300642>.
- 26 See, e.g., Andrew Anglemeyer et al., *The Accessibility of Firearms and Risk for Suicide and Homicide Victimization Among Household Members*, 160 ANNALS OF INTERNAL MEDICINE 101 (2014), available at <http://annals.org/aim/article/1814426/accessibility-firearms-risk-suicide-homicide-victimization-among-household-members-systematic> (comprehensive review and meta-analysis of scientific literature).
- 27 NATIONAL PHYSICIANS ALLIANCE & LAW CENTER TO PREVENT GUN VIOLENCE, *GUN SAFETY & PUBLIC HEALTH: POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A MORE SECURE AMERICA* 4 (Aug. 2013), available at <http://smartgunlaws.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/gunsafety-and-publichealth.pdf>.
- 28 Ryan Foley et al., *Chronicle of Agony: Gun Accidents Kill At Least 1 Kid Every Other Day*, USA TODAY (Oct. 14, 2016), available at <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2016/10/14/ap-usa-today-gun-accidents-children/91906700/>.
- 29 NATIONAL PHYSICIANS ALLIANCE & LAW CENTER TO PREVENT GUN VIOLENCE, *supra* note 27, at 4.
- 30 Ryan Foley, *supra* note 28.
- 31 Andrew Anglemeyer et al., *supra* note 26.
- 32 HARVARD T.H. CHAN SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH, *Firearm Access is a Risk Factor for Suicide*, <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/means-matter/means-matter/risk/> (last visited Nov. 17, 2016).
- 33 HARVARD T.H. CHAN SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH, *Lethality of Suicide Methods* <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/means-matter/means-matter/case-fatal-ity/> (last visited Nov. 17, 2016).
- 34 Jennifer Agiesta & Tom LoBianco, *Poll: Gun Control Support Spikes After Shooting*, CNN (June 20, 2016), <http://www.cnn.com/2016/06/20/politics/cnn-gun-poll/>.
- 35 CATHY J. COHEN ET AL., *supra* note 5, at 6.
- 36 LAW CTR TO PREVENT GUN VIOLENCE, *Universal Background Checks*, <http://smartgunlaws.org/gun-laws/policy-areas/background-checks/universal-background-checks/#state> (last visited Nov. 28, 2016).
- 37 Amber Phillips, *The Senate Voted On 4 Popular Gun Control Proposals Monday. Here’s Why None of Them Passed.* (June 20, 2016), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2016/06/20/the-senate-will-vote-on-4-gun-control-proposals-monday-heres-everything-you-need-to-know/>.
- 38 NAT’L P’SHP FOR WOMEN & FAMILIES ET AL., *POLITICS IN THE EXAM ROOM: A GROWING THREAT* 16 (Oct. 2015), available at <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/repro/politics-in-the-exam-room-a-growing-threat.pdf>.
- 39 BRADY CAMPAIGN TO PREVENT GUN VIOLENCE, *Key Gun Violence Statistics*, <http://www.bradycampaign.org/key-gun-violence-statistics> (last visited Nov. 21, 2016).
- 40 *Id.*

