

Connecticut Domestic Violence and Guns

October 2014

This fact sheet contains a correction.

Connecticut has strong restrictions on access to firearms by domestic abusers. However, more can be done to remove guns at the scene of domestic violence incidents.

State gun and domestic violence overview

Connecticut is home to a significant amount of gun violence.

- From 2002 to 2011, 1,774 people were killed with guns in Connecticut. That is almost the same number as all U.S. combat deaths in the war in Afghanistan.¹
- Somebody is killed with a gun in Connecticut every two days: In 2011 alone, there were 210 gun deaths in the state.²

Domestic violence fatalities are prevalent in Connecticut, and they are frequently a result of gun crime.

- According to the FBI, there were 109 domestic violence homicides in Connecticut from 2003 to 2012, which includes both male and female victims.
- Of those homicides, almost half of the victims—41.3 percent—were killed with guns.³

Women are far more at risk to be victims of fatal domestic violence, and guns play a significant role in that violence.

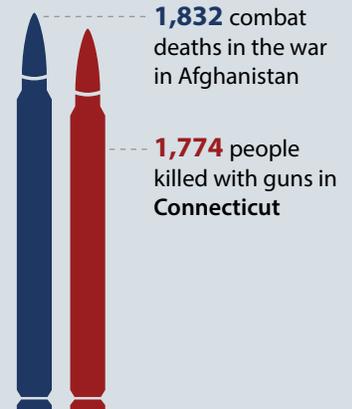
- Of the 239 female homicide victims in Connecticut from 2003 to 2012, 99 were killed as a result of a domestic violence incident.⁴
- Firearms accounted for the murders of 100 women in Connecticut from 2002 to 2011.⁵

Overview of Connecticut laws to protect women from abusers and stalkers

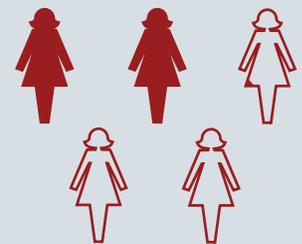
Connecticut has strong laws to prevent domestic abusers from possessing guns.

- Under Connecticut law, persons convicted of certain violent misdemeanors are prohibited from possessing firearms, regardless of the relationship between the parties.⁶
- Certain second-degree stalking misdemeanants are prohibited from possessing firearms in Connecticut.⁷
- Connecticut bars persons from possessing guns if they are subject to a restraining or protective order in a case involving the use, attempted use, or threatened use of physical force against another person. The law does not specifically require that the order be issued in a domestic violence restraining or protective order case.⁸
- Connecticut makes a person ineligible for a handgun permit if that person is subject

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From 2003 to 2012, 41.4 percent of female domestic violence homicide victims in Connecticut were killed with a gun.



to a domestic violence restraining or protective order in a case involving the use, attempted use, or threatened use of physical force against another person.⁹

- In Connecticut, domestic violence is defined broadly and includes persons who are in or have recently been in a dating relationship.¹⁰
- Connecticut strengthened its law requiring subjects of a restraining order to surrender firearms in 2013. People who are prohibited from purchasing or possessing firearms by a restraining or protective order are required to surrender their firearms to the commissioner of the Connecticut Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection or transfer them to a licensed dealer.¹¹
- Whenever a peace officer determines that a “family violence crime” has been committed, the officer may remove any firearm or ammunition at the location where the crime is alleged to have been committed that is in the possession of any person arrested for or suspected of the commission of the crime or that is in plain view.¹²
- Connecticut requires a background check before every gun sale.¹³

However, the state still has a loophole that can let some abusers have easy access to guns.

- Connecticut law authorizes but does not require law enforcement to remove firearms and ammunition from the scene of a domestic violence incident.

Support for doing more to protect women from abusers and stalkers in Connecticut

Most Connecticut voters strongly support expanding background checks to keep guns from criminals, domestic abusers, and other dangerous people.

- In a March 2013 poll conducted by Quinnipiac University, 93 percent of Connecticut voters supported universal background checks, including support from 89 percent of gun-owning households.¹⁴

Case study

We need universal background checks and other important measures to keep guns out of the hands of dangerous abusers.

- Sharon Rentas was shot in a Hartford, Connecticut, Family Dollar store by her husband, Elvin Perez-Soto, on May 24, 2014 before he turned the gun on himself. Perez-Soto was a convicted felon who should have been barred from possessing a gun under Connecticut law. Perez-Soto and Rentas had been married for 12 years, but Rentas had previously reported abuse in their relationship. Rentas had applied for a restraining order two days before the shooting and was in the process of filing for divorce, according to police. Perez-Soto survived his self-inflicted wound and was charged with attempted murder, first-degree assault, criminal possession of a firearm, reckless endangerment, and unlawful discharge of a firearm.¹⁵

***Correction, October 15, 2014:** This fact sheet has been corrected to accurately reflect that Connecticut does prohibit stalkers from possessing guns.

Where does Connecticut stand on laws to protect women from abusers and stalkers?

- Misdemeanant domestic abusers prohibited?
- Individuals subject to a domestic violence protective order prohibited?
- Stalkers prohibited?*
- Background checks required on all gun sales?

A majority of Connecticut voters support universal background checks.



Endnotes

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "WISQARS™ (Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System)," available at <http://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/fatal.html> (last accessed August 2014); U.S. Department of Defense, U.S. Casualty Status (2014), available at <http://www.defense.gov/NEWS/casualty.pdf>.
2. *Ibid.*
3. Federal Bureau of Investigation, Supplementary Homicide Data (U.S. Department of Justice, 2003–2012).
4. *Ibid.*
5. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "WISQARS™ (Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System)," available at <http://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/fatal.html> (last accessed August 2014).
6. Conn. Gen. Stat. §§ 53a-61, 53a-61a, 53a-96.
7. Conn. Gen. Stat. § 53a-181d.
8. Conn. Gen. Stat. § 53a-217(a)(4); see Conn. Gen. Stat. § 53a-217c(a)(5) for similar prohibitions of "criminal possession of a pistol or revolver."
9. Conn. Gen. Stat. § 29-36f(b)(6).
10. Conn. Gen. Stat. § 46b-38a(2).
11. Conn. Gen. Stat. § 29-36k(a).
12. Conn. Gen. Stat. § 46b-38b(a).
13. Conn. Gen. Stat. §§ 29-33(a), (c), 29-37a(d), g(c), 29-28(b), 29-36f, 29-36g, 29-38g, 29-38h, l(a), (b).
14. Quinnipiac University, "Connecticut Voters Back Most Gun Measures 2-1 Or More, Quinnipiac University Poll Finds; 93% Want Background Checks For All Gun Buyers," Press release, March 6, 2013, available at <http://www.quinnipiac.edu/news-and-events/quinnipiac-university-poll/connecticut/release-detail?ReleaseID=1859>.
15. Ari Mason and Abby Niezgod, "Man Accused of Shooting Wife at Family Dollar Store Arraigned," NBC News Connecticut, May 29, 2014, available at <http://www.nbcconnecticut.com/news/local/Shooting-at-Family-Dollar-Store-in-Hartford-Domestic-Woman-Shot-260537431.html>; Jamie Ratliff, "Sister of Family Dollar Store Shooting Victim Shares Story to Fight Domestic Violence," NBC News Connecticut, June 3, 2014, available at <http://www.nbcconnecticut.com/news/local/Sister-of-Family-Dollar-Store-Shooting-Victim-Shares-Story-to-Fight-Domestic-Violence-261608061.html>.