

Maryland Domestic Violence and Guns

October 2014

This fact sheet contains a correction.

Maryland has strong laws to restrict access to firearms by domestic abusers. However, more can be done to keep guns out of the hands of dangerous persons, such as stalkers and non-cohabitating dating partners.

State gun and domestic violence overview

Maryland is home to a staggering amount of gun violence.

- From 2002 to 2011, 6,263 people were killed with guns in Maryland. That is more than the number of all U.S. combat deaths in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan combined.¹
- Somebody is killed with a gun in Maryland every 16 hours: In 2011 alone, there were 542 gun deaths in the state.²

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

- According to the FBI, there were 256 domestic violence homicides in Maryland from 2003 to 2012, which include both male and female victims.
- Of those homicides, almost half of the victims—42.2 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 722 female homicide victims in Maryland from 2003 to 2012, 213 were killed as a result of a domestic violence incident.⁴
- Firearms accounted for the murders of 340 women in Maryland from 2002 to 2011.⁵

Overview of Maryland laws to protect women from abusers and stalkers

Maryland has several laws to prevent abusers from having easy access to guns.

- Maryland bars gun possession by some persons convicted of misdemeanor violent crimes.⁶
- Maryland prohibits persons subject to protective orders from purchasing or possessing guns.⁷
- Under Maryland law, subjects of domestic violence protective orders are required to surrender their guns to law enforcement.⁸
- Maryland requires a background check before the sale of every handgun.^{9*}

From 2002 to 2011, 6,263 people were killed with guns in Maryland. That is more than the number of all U.S. combat deaths in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan combined.



From 2003 to 2012, 44.6 percent of female domestic violence homicide victims in Maryland were killed with a gun.



Maryland can do more to protect its citizens from domestic violence.

- Maryland could strengthen its laws by prohibiting all persons convicted of domestic violence misdemeanors from accessing firearms, similar to federal law.
- Under Maryland law, domestic violence protective orders do not extend to non-cohabitating current or former dating partners.¹⁰
- Maryland could strengthen its laws by requiring a background check prior to all firearms sales, including long gun sales, by unlicensed sellers.*

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

Many Maryland voters strongly support expanding background checks to keep guns from criminals, domestic abusers, and other dangerous persons.

- In a March 2013 poll conducted by *The Washington Post*, 89 percent of those surveyed support requiring background checks on all purchases at gun shows, and 85 percent support a licensing requirement for all gun owners.¹¹

Case study

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

- A history of domestic disputes preceded the evening of August 23, 2013, when James Burnham shot his 25-year-old daughter and murdered his wife before committing suicide. The family, who lived in Dundalk, Maryland, had guests over to play cards in their home. Burnham and his wife went upstairs after an argument over a game, and their daughter went up to check on them. People in the house heard gunshots, and the daughter came downstairs with a bullet wound in her upper body. Police later discovered the bodies of Burnham and his wife in their bedroom.¹²

***Correction, October 17, 2014:** This fact sheet has been corrected to accurately reflect that Maryland does not require background checks on all gun sales.

Where does Maryland 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 Maryland voters support requiring background checks on all gun show purchases.



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, Supplemental 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)."
6. Md. Code Ann., Pub. Safety §§ 5-101(g), 5-206, 5-133(b)(1), (c), 5-134(b)(2).
7. Md. Code Ann., Pub. Safety §§ 5-133(b)(8), 5-134(b)(10).
8. Md. Code Ann., Fam. Law § 4-506(f).
9. Md. Code Ann., Pub. Safety § 5-124 et seq.
10. Md. Code Ann., Fam. Law § 4-501(m).
11. The Washington Post, "Marylanders support several gun restrictions, Post poll finds," Press release, March 2, 2013, available at http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/polling/marylanders-support-several-gun-restrictions-post/2013/02/26/52b32790-8033-11e2-a671-0307392de8de_page.html.
12. WBAL TV, "Dundalk murder-suicide leaves couple dead, daughter injured," August 26, 2013, available at <http://www.wbaltv.com/news/maryland/baltimore-county/2-dead-1-hurt-in-baltimore-county-hostage-incident/21632936#!bvqnon>.