

# Minnesota Domestic Violence and Guns

October 2014

Due to new legislation, Minnesota has strong restrictions on access to firearms by domestic abusers. More can be done to prevent domestic abusers from gaining access to guns, however, primarily by strengthening background checks.

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## State gun and domestic violence overview

*Minnesota is home to a significant amount of gun violence.*

- From 2002 to 2011, 3,503 people were killed with guns in Minnesota. That is more than the number of all U.S. combat deaths in the Iraq War.<sup>1</sup>
- Somebody is killed with a gun in Minnesota every day: In 2011 alone, there were 396 gun deaths in the state.<sup>2</sup>

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

- According to the Minnesota Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board, there were 18 domestic violence homicides in Minnesota in 2012. Of those murders, half of the victims were killed with guns.<sup>3</sup>

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

- From 2003 to 2012, there were 265 female homicide victims in Minnesota. Domestic violence accounted for 107 of these deaths, and guns were used to murder 53 percent of these women.<sup>4</sup>
- Firearms accounted for the murders of 145 women in Minnesota from 2002 to 2011.<sup>5</sup>

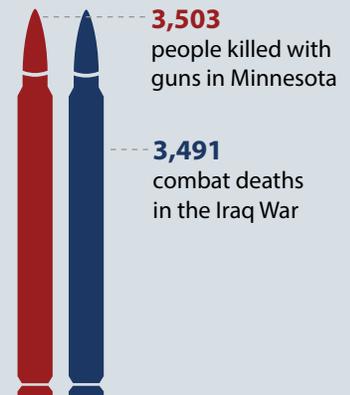
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## Overview of Minnesota laws to protect women from abusers and stalkers

*Minnesota law currently prevents some domestic abusers from possessing guns.*

- In 2014, Minnesota passed a law that requires courts to order persons subject to restraining orders for domestic violence or stalking to surrender their firearms.<sup>6</sup>
- These restraining orders are available to victims of abuse between family members, household members, current and former spouses, individuals in a dating relationship, or adults with a child in common.<sup>7</sup>
- Minnesota legislation bars domestic violence misdemeanants from possessing firearms and requires them to surrender their firearms.<sup>8</sup>
- Minnesota prohibits gun possession by certain misdemeanor stalkers and these stalkers must surrender their firearms under certain circumstances.<sup>9</sup>

**From 2002 to 2011, more people were killed with guns in Minnesota than U.S. soldiers killed in combat in the Iraq War.**



**From 2003 to 2012, more than 40 percent of all female homicides in Minnesota were cases of domestic violence involving family members or intimate partners.**



*The state law still has loopholes that can let some abusers have easy access to guns.*

- Minnesota does not require a background check for gun buyers, including those at gun shows or over the Internet.

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

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

- In a March 2013 Minnesota Star Tribune poll, 70 percent of those surveyed supported universal background checks, including 60 percent of gun owners and 64 percent of Republicans.<sup>10</sup>

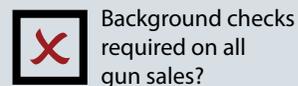
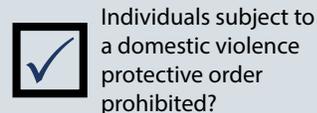
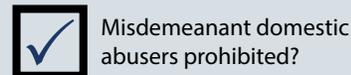
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## Case study

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

- Teri Lee and Steven Van Keuren had dated for three-and-a-half years when, in July 2006, Lee broke off the relationship. Shortly after the break-up, Van Keuren broke into Lee's home and threatened her with butcher knives. He was arrested following this incident and was released on bail with a court order directing Van Keuren to stay away from Lee, her family members, and her home while the criminal case was pending. In September 2006, Van Keuren violated this order by showing up at Lee's daughter's volleyball game, and although Lee reported this violation to police, Van Keuren remained free on bail. Two days later, on September 22, 2006, Van Keuren broke into Lee's home and fatally shot her and her boyfriend, Tim Hawkinson. Van Keuren was convicted of two counts of first-degree murder and sentenced to two consecutive life terms in prison.<sup>11</sup>

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



**A majority of Minnesotans support background checks required on all gun sales.**



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## 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. Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women, "2012 Annual Femicide Report" (2012), available at [http://www.ndvfri.org/reports/minnesota/Minnesota\\_StatewideCoalition\\_AnnualReport\\_2012.pdf](http://www.ndvfri.org/reports/minnesota/Minnesota_StatewideCoalition_AnnualReport_2012.pdf).
4. Federal Bureau of Investigation, Supplementary Homicide Data (U.S. Department of Justice, 2003-2012).
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. Minn. Stat. §§ 518B.01, subd. 6(15)(g) (as amended by 2014 MN H.F. 3238 § 2).
7. Minn. Stat. § 518B.01, subd. 2(b).
8. Minn. Stat. §§ 624.713, subd. 1(12), 609.2242 subd. 3(f) (as amended by 2014 MN H.F. 3238 § 5).
9. Minn. Stat. §§ 609.749(8)(e), 624.713 subd. 1(11).
10. Jim Ragsdale, "Minnesota Poll: Background Checks Draw Strong Gun Owner Support," *Star Tribune*, March 4, 2013, available at <http://www.startribune.com/politics/statelocal/194720231.html>.
11. Winnie Stachelberg, Arkadi Gerney, Chelsea Parsons, and Megan Knauss, "Preventing Domestic Abusers and Stalkers from Accessing Guns" (Washington: Center for American Progress, 2013), available at <http://americanprogress.org/issues/civil-liberties/report/2013/05/09/60705/preventing-domestic-abusers-and-stalkers-from-accessing-guns/>.