

# Vermont Domestic Violence and Guns

October 2014

Vermont has no laws specifically aimed at restricting access to firearms by domestic abusers. Much can be done to keep guns out of the hands of dangerous persons, including convicted domestic violence misdemeanants, stalkers, and subjects of domestic violence protective orders.

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## State gun and domestic violence overview

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

- From 2002 to 2011, 583 people were killed with guns in Vermont.<sup>1</sup>
- Somebody is killed with a gun in Vermont every five days: In 2011 alone, there were 78 gun deaths in the state.<sup>2</sup>

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

- According to the FBI, there were 18 domestic violence homicides in Vermont from 2003 to 2012, which includes both male and female victims.
- Of those homicides, more than half of the victims—55.6 percent—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.*

- Of the 46 female homicide victims in Vermont from 2003 to 2012, 15 were the result of a domestic violence incident.<sup>4</sup>

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

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

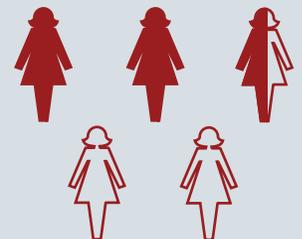
- Domestic violence laws in the state apply to dating partners who are living or have lived together.<sup>5</sup> Although state law does not prohibit misdemeanor abusers and subjects of domestic violence protective orders from possessing guns, existing federal prohibitions would apply to dating and intimate partners in Vermont.

*Vermont still has significant loopholes that can let some abusers have easy access to guns.*

- Vermont has no law prohibiting domestic violence misdemeanants or subjects of domestic violence protective orders from purchasing or possessing firearms.
- Vermont does not require the surrender of firearms owned by a person who has become prohibited from possessing firearms under federal law.

From 2002 to 2011,  
**583 people**  
were killed with guns in  
**Vermont.**

From 2003 to 2012, 53.3  
percent of female domestic  
violence homicide victims in  
Vermont were killed with a gun.



- State law also does not bar stalking misdemeanants from purchasing or possessing firearms.
- Vermont does not require a background check for all gun buyers, including those shopping at gun shows or over the Internet.

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

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

- In an April poll conducted by Lincoln Park Strategies, 81 percent of Vermont voters supported requiring all gun buyers to pass criminal background checks for all gun sales; 67 percent of voters said they would be more likely to vote for a candidate who supports criminal background checks on all gun sales.<sup>6</sup>

## Case study

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

- Troy Gray shot his wife and killed himself on August 13, 2013, at their home in Vermont, following years of an abusive relationship. Rhonda Gray had previously taken out protective orders against her husband both in New Hampshire and Vermont, and Troy was recently arrested for domestic abuse assault. Troy was released the day before the murder on the condition that he could not enter their home or have contact with Rhonda or their daughters; he was also banned from possessing guns. However, Troy was still able to find a rifle and used it to commit the murder.<sup>7</sup>

## Where does Vermont 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 Vermonters support universal background checks.**



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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).
2. Ibid.
3. Federal Bureau of Investigation, Supplemental Homicide Data (U.S. Department of Justice, 2003–2012).
4. Ibid.
5. 15 Vt. Stat. Ann. § 1101(2).
6. Lincoln Park Strategies, "Vermont Statewide: A Survey of Likely Voters" (2014), available at [http://d3n8a8pro7vhm.cloudfront.net/gunsensevt/pages/133/attachments/original/1399336345/GunSenseVT-Statewide\\_Poll-April\\_2014\\_MQ.pdf?1399336345](http://d3n8a8pro7vhm.cloudfront.net/gunsensevt/pages/133/attachments/original/1399336345/GunSenseVT-Statewide_Poll-April_2014_MQ.pdf?1399336345).
7. The Burlington Free Press, "Police say domestic violence led to murder-suicide in Fairlee," August 13, 2013, available at <http://archive.burlingtonfreepress.com/article/20130813/NEWS07/308130013/Police-investigate-murder-suicide-in-Fairlee>; Mark Davis, "Couple Dead in Fairlee," Valley News, August 14, 2013, available at <http://www.vnews.com/lifetimes/8054166-95/couple-dead-in-fairlee>.