

Washington Domestic Violence and Guns

October 2014

Washington 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.

State gun and domestic violence overview

Washington is home to a staggering amount of gun violence.

- From 2002 to 2011, 5,806 people were killed with guns in Washington. 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 Washington every 14 hours: In 2011 alone, there were 624 gun deaths in the state.²

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

- According to the FBI, there were 238 domestic violence homicides in Washington from 2003 to 2012, which include both male and female victims.
- Of those homicides, more than half of the victims—51.7 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 503 female homicide victims in Washington from 2003 to 2012, 189 were killed as a result of a domestic violence incident.⁴
- Firearms accounted for the murders of 228 women in Washington from 2002 to 2011.⁵

Overview of Washington laws to protect women from abusers and stalkers

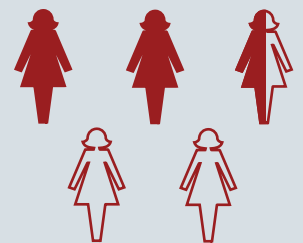
Washington has several laws to prevent abusers from having easy access to guns.

- Domestic violence misdemeanants are prohibited from purchasing or possessing firearms.⁶
- In 2014, Washington enacted legislation that requires domestic abusers who are subject to final protective or temporary restraining orders to surrender their firearms and their concealed carry licenses, if applicable. This requirement applies if the perpetrator presents a credible threat to the physical safety of an intimate partner or child. Such individuals are also prohibited from possessing or purchasing guns.⁷

From 2002 to 2011, 5,806 people were killed with guns in Washington. That is more than the number of all U.S. combat deaths in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan combined.



From 2003 to 2012, 51.9 percent of female domestic violence homicide victims in Washington were killed with a gun.



- Washington's domestic violence laws include people in dating relationships,⁸ and the law enacted in 2014 adds domestic partners to the definition of family member.⁹
- Washington prohibits firearm purchase or possession by individuals convicted of stalking misdemeanors against a family or household member.¹⁰

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

- Washington does not prohibit firearm purchase or possession by all individuals convicted of stalking misdemeanors.
- State law does not require private sellers to conduct background checks prior to selling a firearm, including gun sales that take place over the Internet or at gun shows. An initiative to require background checks for private sales is on the November 2014 ballot in Washington.

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

Many Washingtonians strongly support expanding background checks to keep guns from criminals, domestic abusers, and other dangerous people.

- In the April 2014 Elway poll, 62 percent of those surveyed supported more extensive background checks.¹¹

Case study

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

- Sheena Henderson was in the process of getting a restraining order against her abusive and mentally unstable husband when, on July 8, 2014, he went to the lab where she worked at Rockwood Cancer treatment center in Spokane and fatally shot her multiple times before shooting himself.¹²

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



Stalkers prohibited?



Misdemeanant domestic abusers prohibited?

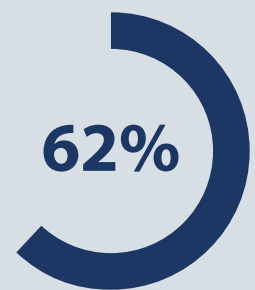


Individuals subject to a domestic violence protective order prohibited?



Background checks required on all gun sales?

A majority of Washington voters support stronger gun laws.



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™."
6. Wash. Rev. Code Ann. § 9.41.040(2)(a)(i).
7. 2014 WA H.B. 1840.
8. Wash. Rev. Code Ann. §§ 9.41.010(5) and 10.99.020(3).
9. 2014 WA H.B. 1840.
10. Wash. Rev. Code Ann. § 9.41.040(2)(a)(i).
11. The Elway Poll, "Competing Gun Initiatives Sow Voter Confusion," Press release, April 15, 2014, available at <http://www.documentcloud.org/documents/1114190-elwaypollonguninitiatives2014a.html#document/p1>.
12. "Deaconess murder-suicide shooting leaves 2 dead," KREM, July 8, 2014, available at <http://www.krem.com/news/One-shot-at-Spokane-cancer-treatment-center--266245081.html>.