



## **Domestic Violence and Firearms: Research on Statutory Interventions**

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### **Part I**

#### **Firearms and Domestic Violence: The Risks**

The crimes of domestic and dating violence and stalking are pervasive in our society. When a violent intimate partner has access to a firearm, a dangerous situation becomes a potentially fatal situation (Bailey, et al., 1997; Campbell, et al., 2003; Kellerman, et al., 1993). More women are killed by their intimate partners than by any other offender group, and firearms are the weapon most often used in intimate partner homicide (Cooper & Smith, 2011). In 2014, of cases with known offenders, roughly 49% of female homicide victims and 6% of male homicide victims were killed by their intimate partners. Overall, fifty-four percent of these homicides were committed with firearms, however firearm use varied by gender of the victim: 57% of female victims were killed with firearms, whereas 43% of male victims were (United States Department of Justice & Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2016).

There is ample evidence that firearms are used in nonfatal domestic violence, as well. This evidence comes from surveys of samples of intimate partner violence survivors and perpetrators, as well as the general population of the United States. Thirty-seven percent of women in domestic violence shelters report that their intimate partners used firearms against them (Sorenson & Wiebe, 2004). Roughly 3% of men enrolled in batterers intervention programs in reported that they threatened, intimidated, or shot at their partners with a firearm (Rothman, Hemenway, Miller, & Azrael, 2005). Finally, a nationally representative survey, the National Crime Victimization Survey, found that firearms were used in 3.4% of nonfatal incidents of intimate partner violence (Truman & Morgan, 2014).

Additionally, when a violent intimate partner has access to a firearm, nonfatal abuse may increase in severity (Zeoli, Malinski, & Turchan, 2016), even when firearms are not directly used in a violent incident. A study of partner-victimized pregnant women found that 41% of their partners owned firearms, 17% of whom kept their firearms "on" them. Using multiple different measurement scales to measure abuse severity, the researchers found consistent evidence that partner access to firearms increased abuse severity (McFarlane, et al., 1998). A study of male

domestic violence offenders involved in the Canadian criminal justice system found that access to a firearm was significantly associated with the severity of intimate partner assaults despite the fact that very few of the assaults actually involved firearms (Folkes, Hilton, & Harris, 2013). In a study of women in battered women's shelters, researchers found that offenders who used firearms against victims also used significantly more types of other weapons than those who did not use firearms (Sorenson & Wiebe, 2004). This may indicate that violent intimates who have access to firearms are particularly high-risk individuals.