

# Nonfatal intimate partner violence: The special role of firearms

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Battered Women's Justice Project



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## Key points

More than survival: the "real world" for women

1. Quick review of IPH (homicide) & guns
2. What's new: nonfatal IPV & guns
3. Information & action take-aways

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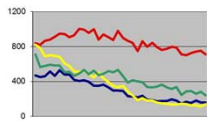
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## Quick review of IPH (homicide)

- Good news: general downward trend



- Bad news: still many deaths and mostly women

FBI, UCR Supplemental Homicide Reports

- Homicide risk highest when ending the relationship

Wilson & Daly, Violence & Victims, 1993

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### Quick review of IPH & guns

- Women are ~2.5 times as likely to be shot and killed by a male intimate as shot, stabbed, strangled, beaten to death or killed in any other way by a stranger  
Kellermann & Mercy, Journal of Trauma, 1992; Sorenson, 2006
- Handguns are weapon of choice  
Kellermann & Mercy, Journal of Trauma, 1992; Sorenson, 2006
- Guns are risk factor for IPH for abused women  
Campbell et al., AJPH, 2003

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### What's new / next

- Expand focus to include nonfatal use
  - Victim reports
  - Batterer reports
  - Population & service implications

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### Victim reports: Some previous research

- Shelters
  - 39% of partners had a firearm
    - Firearm was used against the woman: 65%  
Sorenson & Wiebe, 2004
- DVROs
  - Firearm used against the woman: 16-24%  
Moracco et al., 2006; Sorenson & Vettes, 2006; Sullivan & Weiss, 2017

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### Victim reports: Philadelphia DV calls



Domestic Violence Agencies (DV-4)  
District Attorney's Office  
Women's Law Project



John & Laura Arnold Foundation  
New Venture Fund

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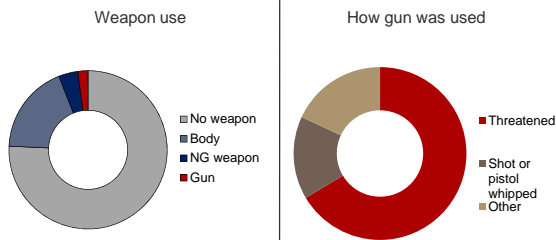
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### IPV in Philadelphia, 2013 35,413 police-responded nonfatal incidents



Sorenson, Journal of Women's Health, 2017

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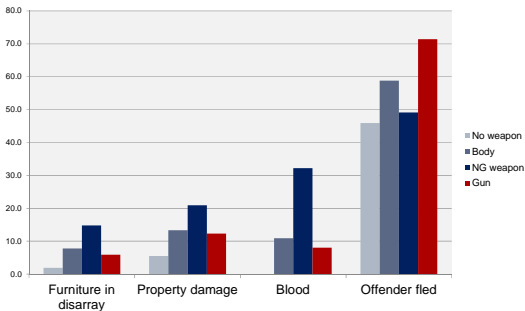
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### Scene, %



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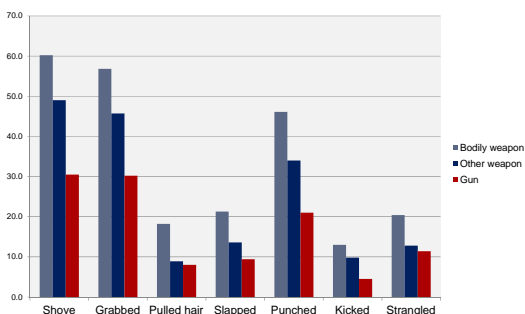
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### Offender behavior, %




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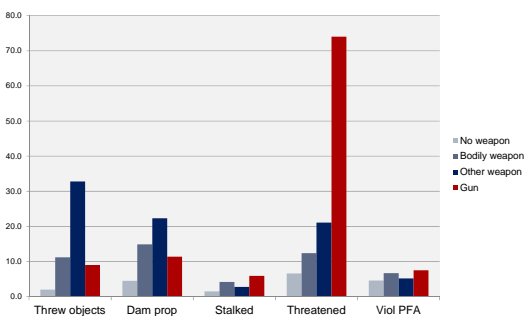
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### Offender behavior, %




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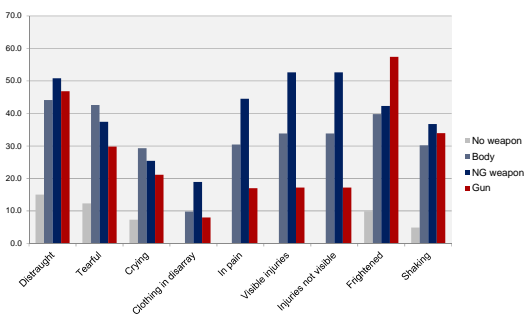
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### Victim presentation, %




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### Responses to coercion

- Cognitive appraisal of threat signaling credible risk
- Compliance or resistance
- Fear arousal

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“The moment he put it to my head, my whole life changed.”

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y4g4z041GhI>

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### Use of Guns to Threaten Intimate Partners by Men Enrolled in Batterer Intervention

Rothman, Hemenway, Miller, & Azrael, *JAMWA*, (2005)

N=8,529 male clients of MA programs




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### The many ways to threaten with a gun

- Talking about the fact that they own a gun
- Threatening to shoot the gun
- Showing the gun to the victim
- Pistol-whipping
- Shooting at something other than the victim, or the victim
- Target practice in the backyard
- Taking a child to target practice
- Keeping posters or other gun-related memorabilia visible throughout the house

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### Threat questions asked

- Have you ever threatened to use a firearm against an intimate partner without actually displaying the firearm?
- Have you ever handled, cleaned, loaded, or displayed a firearm during an argument with a partner or ex-partner?
- Have you ever threatened to use a firearm against a person or thing an intimate partner cared about (family member, pet, friend, or object) without actually displaying a firearm?
- Have you ever shot a gun during an argument with a partner or ex-partner?

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### Results

Gun-ownership past 3 years:	7%
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### Results

Gun-ownership past 3 years: 7%



Made multiple gun-threats: 46%

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### Results

Gun-ownership past 3 years: 7%



Made multiple gun-threats: 46%

Knife threats were also more common among gun-owners as compared to non-gun owners

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### Implications

- **Abusers and guns are a bad combination**  
Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)  
Lautenberg Amendment
- **Policy evaluation**  
Some assessment of implementation and enforcement necessary
- **Future**  
Boyfriend loophole  
"Smart" guns

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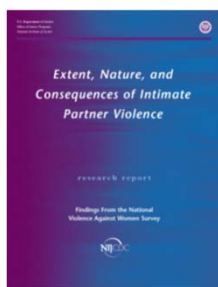
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### Thinking beyond service populations

Tjaden P, Thoennes N.  
Findings from National  
Violence Against Women  
Survey.  
NIJ & CDC, 2000.




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### Weapon use in nonfatal IPV, U.S., lifetime, %

	Women	Men
<u>Gun</u>		
•threatened with	3.5	0.4
•used against	0.7	0.1

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## Weapon use in nonfatal IPV, U.S., lifetime, %

	Women	Men
<u>Gun</u>		
•threatened with	3.5	0.4
•used against	0.7	0.1
<u>Knife</u>		
•threatened with	2.8	1.6
•used against	0.9	0.8

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## If those numbers hold

- ~4.5M women alive today have had an intimate partner threaten them with a gun
- ~1M have been shot or shot at by a partner




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## Women who purchase guns

Are at increased risk of suicide and homicide.

- Risk for both is greater for women than for men.
- Lasts for at least 6 years.

Wintemute et al. NEJM, 1999.

No evidence that gun owners are more distressed or disturbed than non-owners; but alcohol misuse higher.

Sorenson & Vites, Evaluation Review, 2008;  
Wintemute, Preventive Medicine, 2015;  
Ladapo et al., Academic Pediatrics, 2016.

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### Information takeaways



What was new to you?

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### Action takeaways



What to do?

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### Conclusion

Must address the role of guns in women's lives as well as their deaths.

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