West Virginia Gun Violence
November 2019

Gun violence takes a devastating toll on West Virginia

• From 2008 through 2017, 2,843 people were killed with guns in West Virginia.¹

• West Virginia is among the deadliest states for gun violence. From 2008 through 2017, West Virginia had the 13th-highest rate of gun deaths of any state, with a rate of 15.42 gun deaths for every 100,000 people. This rate is 42 percent higher than the national average.²

The burden of gun violence in West Virginia falls disproportionately on communities of color

• Approximately 19 percent of the state’s gun homicide victims are Black; however, only 4 percent of the state’s population is Black.³

Domestic violence and access to guns is a lethal combination in West Virginia

• From 2007 through 2016, 43 women were fatally shot by an intimate partner in West Virginia.⁴

• In West Virginia, 58 percent of female murder victims are killed by an intimate partner; out of those, 55 percent are killed with a gun.⁵

Gun suicides are a substantial problem in West Virginia

• With 11.5 gun suicides per 100,000 people, West Virginia ranks fifth in the United States with a rate 74 percent higher than the national average.⁶
• From 2008 through 2017, 2,120 people in West Virginia died by gun-related suicide.7

Gun theft is a substantial problem in West Virginia

• From 2012 through 2018, close to 756 firearms were stolen from gun dealers in West Virginia.8

• Overall, an estimated 17,187 firearms were stolen in West Virginia from both individual gun owners and gun dealers from 2012 through 2017.9

Weak gun laws make West Virginia a favorite state for illegal gun traffickers to purchase guns

• West Virginia has the highest rate of crime gun exports—guns sold in West Virginia that are later used in crimes in other states—in the country.10

• From 2010 through 2018, West Virginia had a rate of 57.8 crime gun exports for every 100,000 people—154 percent higher than the national average.11

Endnotes


2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

4 Center for American Progress analysis of Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research, “Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program Data: Supplementary Homicide Reports, 1976–2016,” available at https://doi.org/10.3886/E110060V5. The authors only included cases with one victim and one aggressor. In the FBI’s Supplementary Homicide Reports, “intimate partners” include boyfriends, girlfriends, husbands, wives, ex-wives, ex-husbands, common-law wives, common-law husbands, and same-sex couples.

5 Ibid.


7 Ibid.


9 Center for American Progress analysis of Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research, “Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program Data: Property Stolen and Recovered (Supplement to Return A) 1960–2017,” available at https://doi.org/10.3886/E110540V2 (last accessed July 2019). Estimations are based on the value of stolen and recovered guns. These figures are based on an average price of $450 per gun, consistent with data from the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics from 2005 to 2010.


11 Ibid.