
REMEMBERING AND HONORING PULSE

ANTI-LGBTQ BIAS AND GUNS ARE TAKING LIVES OF COUNTLESS LGBTQ PEOPLE



INTRODUCTION

On June 12, 2016, a man fatally shot 49 people and wounded 58 more at Pulse, an LGBTQ nightclub in Orlando, FL. The victims, primarily LGBTQ and Latinx, were senselessly killed in what was supposed to be a safe space while celebrating their shared identity and Pride month. This horrific tragedy changed the LGBTQ community forever, catalyzing the movement to unite behind gun violence prevention. Pulse is a reminder of the work that remains to end the acts of hate that wound and kill LGBTQ Americans today—violence that all too often is perpetrated with guns.

As the nation marks four years since this tragedy, we must never lose sight of the unfulfilled hopes, the families shattered, and the love lost in this preventable act of mass murder. The thousands more killed by gun violence since Pulse underscore the glaring failure of our elected officials to take common sense steps to combat the scourge of gun violence that plagues our nation. Advocates and people across this country must remain as resolved as ever to honor those taken with action, and work to ensure that all of us may live safe from violence.

HATE, VIOLENCE, AND STIGMA AGAINST THE LGBTQ COMMUNITY

Bias-motivated crimes are a real, frightening problem in the U.S., and LGBTQ people continue to be targeted because of who they are. Hate is far more deadly when armed with a gun. In an average year, over 10,300 hate crimes in the U.S. involve a firearm—more than 28 every day.

The epidemic of violence against LGBTQ people, disproportionately against transgender women of color, is staggering. In 2018 alone, over 1,300 reported hate crimes were motivated by bias against LGBTQ people. These incidents make up one in five hate crimes.

Alarming, reported hate crimes are on the rise in the U.S. In 2018, reported hate crimes targeting LGBTQ individuals in-

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10,300+
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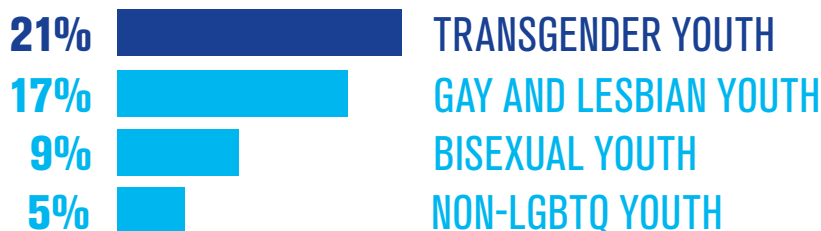
28 EVERY
DAY

creased by 11 percent over the prior year, including a 41 percent increase in reported crimes directed against an individual for their gender identity. The Southern Poverty Law Center also [found](#) that the number of anti-LGBTQ hate groups increased by 43 percent in 2019.

It's not only the LGBTQ community that is affected by hate-fueled violence. Bias-motivated crimes based on race, religion, nationality, disability, and gender remain at troublingly high levels, and LGBTQ people hold many of these identities as well. Among [reported](#) hate crimes, racially motivated crime remains the most common, with nearly half of race-based hate crimes targeting Black people. In 2018, for the third year in a row, there was a significant uptick in hate crimes targeting the Latinx community, increasing 14 percent from the prior year. While the number of hate crimes involving religious bias decreased, Americans continue to be targeted on the basis of their faith. In 2018, nearly 60 percent of such crimes targeted Jewish people and Jewish institutions.

As we saw in 2016 with the Pulse shooting, sometimes this bigoted hate is so devastating in scope that it captures the attention of the nation. In June 2015, a white supremacist opened fire at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, SC, killing nine Black worshippers. In October 2018, a gunman who had expressed anti-Semitic and white supremacist views attacked worshippers at a synagogue in Pittsburgh, PA. with an assault rifle and other firearms, murdering 11 people and injuring at least six others. In April 2019, an anti-Semitic gunman opened fire at a synagogue in Poway, CA, killing one worshipper and injuring three others. And in August 2019, a white nationalist drove 10 hours to a Walmart in El Paso, TX, where he killed 23 people and injured 23 others.

PERCENTAGE OF YOUTH THREATENED WITH A WEAPON ON SCHOOL PROPERTY



But too many tragedies don't get the attention and action they should. LGBTQ youth are also more likely than non-LGBTQ youth to experience bias-motivated violence that involves weapons during childhood and adolescence. HRC's analysis of public-use data from the [Youth Risk Behavior System \(YRBS\)](#) found that while 5 percent of non-LGBTQ youth have been threatened with a weapon on school property, 17 percent of gay and lesbian youth, 9 percent of bisexual youth, and 21 percent of transgender youth have been threatened with a weapon on school property.

The harm and trauma of hate-motivated violence reach far beyond just the direct victims. News of a violent attack on a marginalized person can feel like an attack on the entire community. [Research shows](#) that following the Pulse nightclub shooting, LGBTQ individuals across the country reported experiencing emotional distress and said they would be less likely to attend safe spaces like LGBTQ nightclubs.

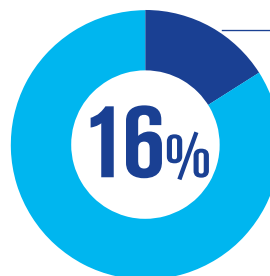
Because it is not mandatory that law enforcement agencies report hate crimes to the FBI, these alarming statistics likely represent only a fraction of such violence. The number of law

enforcement agencies reporting hate crimes data decreased by 110 from 2017 to 2018, and at least 85 cities with populations exceeding 100,000 either did not report data to the FBI or reported zero hate crimes. The lack of mandatory reporting means that the FBI data, while helpful, paints an incomplete picture of hate crimes against the LGBTQ and other communities.

GUN VIOLENCE AND LGBTQ PEOPLE

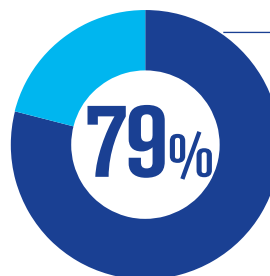
HOMICIDE

The gun homicide rate in the U.S. is 25 times higher than that of other high-income countries. Our country's gun violence epidemic has taken an enormous toll on the LGBTQ community. From the Pulse shooting in Orlando in 2016, to youth suicides and anti-trans violence across the country, our community has suffered terribly as a result of our nation's inadequate gun safety laws.



TRANS
POPULATION
IN THE U.S.
ESTIMATED
TO BE BLACK

Transgender and gender non-conforming (GNC) people are uniquely impacted by gun violence. An analysis of the Transgender Homicide Tracker found that of the 80 homicides of transgender and gender non-conforming people in the U.S. between 2017 and 2019, three-fourths involved a gun. Anti-trans violence, and specifically anti-trans gun violence, is concentrated against the

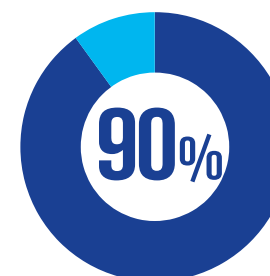


KNOWN TRANS
HOMICIDE
VICTIMS WHO
WERE BLACK

Black community. While just 16 percent of the trans population in the U.S. is estimated to be Black, 79 percent of known trans homicide victims were Black. For Black trans women especially, guns are inextricably intertwined with the threat of violence. That same data show that while 66 percent of all homicides of Black women are committed with a gun, 81 percent of homicides of Black trans women were committed with a gun.

SUICIDE

Studies show that LGBTQ people, especially LGBTQ youth, are at a higher risk of attempting suicide. And access to a firearm triples the risk of suicide death. Most people who attempt suicide do not die—unless they use a gun. Ninety percent of suicide attempts with a gun are fatal, while only 4 percent of attempts not involving a gun are fatal. In fact, nearly two-thirds of firearm deaths in the U.S. are suicides.



SUICIDE ATTEMPTS
WITH A GUN THAT
ARE FATAL

According to the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey, 40 percent of transgender people report having attempted suicide in their lifetime, nearly nine times the national average. Furthermore, an HRC Foundation analysis of public-use data from the YRBS found that one in five LGBTQ youth have attempted suicide, compared to 6 percent of non-LGBTQ youth. These

data imply that this epidemic of firearm suicide could have a disproportionate impact on transgender and adolescent members of the LGBTQ community. Members of the LGBTQ community are at greater risk due to the impact that social stigma, family rejection, bullying, harassment, and abuse have on their well-being. However, LGBTQ youth whose families affirm their gender and sexual orientation are almost 50 percent less likely to attempt suicide compared to those whose families are unsupportive.

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

Intimate partner violence is also a major concern for the LGBTQ community, with particular vulnerability among transgender and youth communities. More than half (54 percent) of transgender people responding to the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey experienced some form of intimate partner violence, including acts involving coercive control and physical harm. According to the CDC's National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey, 44 percent of lesbians and 61 percent of bisexual women experience rape, physical violence, or stalking by an intimate partner, compared to 35 percent of straight women. Dating violence also impacts LGBTQ youth, who experience dating violence at twice the rate of their non-LGBTQ peers, based on an HRC Foundation analysis of public-use data from the YRBS. Firearm access helps fuel intimate partner violence and significantly increases the risk of lethal violence. One study found that victims of intimate partner violence are five times more likely to be killed if their abuser has access to a gun..



THE PATH TO SAVING LIVES

There is no single solution to stopping gun violence in the U.S. Only through a comprehensive approach can we effectively reduce and prevent all forms of gun violence. As a first step toward comprehensive change, our nation must adopt common sense gun violence prevention measures, including:

- The Disarm Hate Act, which closes a dangerous loophole in federal law by prohibiting people convicted of violent hate crimes from accessing or acquiring guns. Under current federal law, a violent or threatening hate crime misdemeanor conviction does not prohibit someone from buying or possessing a gun. While some states have laws closing this gap, most do not. As a result, in much of the country, someone convicted of a violent hate crime can still legally pass a background check and purchase a firearm, including military-style weapons.

- The Violence Against Women Act, which was passed in 1994 and reauthorized with strong bipartisan majorities in 2000, 2005, and 2013. The current reauthorization strengthens protective orders and closes the stalker and “boyfriend” [loopholes](#). House and Senate Republicans have objected to these proposals and are blocking the reauthorization.

Solving our gun crisis requires a range of policy changes including:

- Limit access to assault weapons and high-capacity magazines
- Limit the ability of those with a history of domestic abuse to access guns The Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act (H.R. 1585/S. 2843) includes several provisions to do just this
- Require mandatory reporting of hate crimes from all law enforcement agencies
- Appropriate at least \$25 million annually for the Centers for Disease Control and National Institutes of Health to conduct research on gun violence

State and federal officials have [failed](#) the LGBTQ community when it comes to ensuring equal treatment in government data collection efforts. While some federal and state demographic data collection efforts include metrics on sexual orientation and gender identity, most fail to obtain this data. Sexual orientation and gender identity questions are also omitted from the country’s largest demographic data collection endeavors, such as the decennial U.S. Census. Municipalities, states and the federal government can and should promulgate policies that require their respective data collection undertakings to be fully inclusive of the LGBTQ community.

Honoring the memories of the lives cut short at Pulse four years ago—and the many other members of the LGBTQ community whose lives have been taken or forever changed by hate and violence—means taking action to strengthen our nation’s gun laws. There’s no time to waste.

METHODOLOGY

In order to obtain estimates for LGBTQ youth experiences of weapon-based violence and suicide, HRC utilized the public-use microdata available from the Centers for Disease Control’s (CDC) Youth Risk Behavior System. Because not every state asks sexual orientation and gender identity questions and not every state makes its data publicly available on the CDC’s data and documentation domain, this analysis is generally limited to a subset of states available on the CDC domain. Data are weighted according to the specifications set forth by the CDC. For variance estimation within strata that contain a single unit, the strata are centered at the population mean instead of the stratum mean.

Everytown for Gun Safety’s analysis of homicides of transgender and gender non-conforming people in the U.S. comes from its Transgender Homicide Tracker, 2017–2019, which tracks all homicides from media and local reports, including those perpetrated by law enforcement. Given the likely underreporting of these homicides by the media, and the prevalent misgendering by [law enforcement](#), these numbers likely represent a tragic undercount. Explore the data here, and download a CSV of it here.