

# Men and guns

While most men are not violent, men account for 80% of murder victims and perpetrators globally.

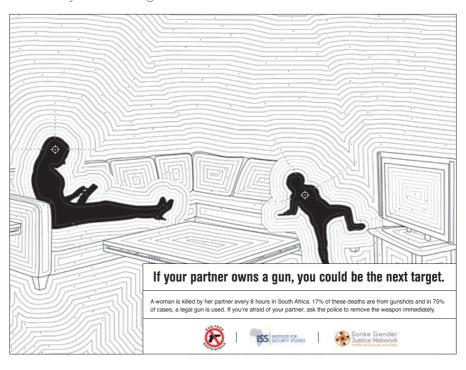
Statistically, the majority of gun owners in the world are male. Traditionally, a gun has long been a cultural symbol of power, strength, and masculinity.

Masculinity – also known as manliness or manhood – is a set of characteristics, behaviours, and roles generally associated with boys and men and is mostly about how society expects men to behave.

From a young age, boys learn that to 'be a man' means to be dominant, courageous, independent and assertive. Manliness is about having strength and power — and this can be demonstrated at work, in sport and in relationships with others, especially women. Men are expected to live up to these ideas of masculinity and are considered unmanly if they do not.

Men are also taught not to show their feelings with the exception of anger, as it is considered unmanly to show emotions and vulnerability, such as being sad, frustrated, fearful or stressed.

"GLOBALLY,
MEN ACCOUNT
FOR 80% OF
ALL MURDER
VICTIMS AND
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# What is toxic masculinity?

Toxic masculinity is when the norms of masculinity have a harmful impact on society and the individual. It doesn't mean that men or boys are toxic or bad. It is society's unfair expectations of men and boys that can lead them to express themselves negatively. It also gets worse when men hide their feelings like grief, hurt, sadness, and loneliness, causing them to behave violently.

"A MAN HAS A HIGHER CHANCE OF BEING A PERPETRATOR OR VICTIM OF GUN VIOLENCE"

For example, it supports the belief that:

- Rage is an acceptable response to frustration.
- Vengeful violence is justified.
- Men are entitled to what they want and can use violence to get what they want.

# Violence against women

Toxic masculinity often includes violence against women, such as rape, physical and emotional abuse, and murder, as some men feel that it is acceptable to be sexually aggressive, to control and dominate women.

There are often news reports of men who have killed their girlfriends after their girlfriends have broken up with them. These men may have seen rejection as an insult to their manhood. Many men haven't been taught to deal with their emotions and to express vulnerability, so the only way they know how to respond is with anger and violence.



# Why men get guns

- For protection Men often take on the role of protector and provider for their families. Some men will, therefore, feel justified to buy a gun to protect their family.
- For power Guns enhance a person's feelings of masculinity as they are seen as a way to achieve prestige, power, authority and respect. However, this feeling is false, as gun ownership by one person mostly makes others around them feel scared, threatened and intimidated instead of safe and protected.

"GUN OWNERSHIP BY ONE PERSON MAKES OTHERS AROUND THEM FEEL SCARED AND INTIMIDATED INSTEAD OF SAFE AND PROTECTED"

# Owning a gun can make you a victim

# But why?

- Carrying a gun may give the owner the 'illusion of invincibility'. This mental state could result in aggressive and provocative behaviour, which increases the risk of victimisation.
- Owning a gun is closely related to other risk-taking behaviours.

## "CARRYING A GUN MAY GIVE THE OWNER THE 'ILLUSION OF INVINCIBILITY"

# Who is at risk of gun violence?

If you are a man, you have a higher chance of being a perpetrator or victim of gun violence. However, there are also other risk factors that play a role.

These factors exist at four levels:



Individual level — refers to each person's biology and experiences, like alcohol or drug abuse, a history of abuse as a child, behavioural disorders, and low academic achievement.



Interpersonal relationships — refers to the quality of relationships an individual has with his or her family, peers and intimate partners.



Community level — refers to the risk factors of community and social environments, such as under-resourced schools and lack of safe spaces for learning, lack of support systems and role models, high acceptance of gender inequality, and exposure to violent crime in the community.



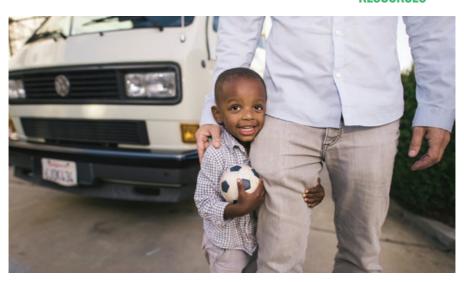
Societal level influences — refers to factors such as religious and cultural beliefs, social norms and economic or social policies that in turn influence people's behaviour.

# Factors that can protect young men against guns:

Just as there are risk factors at all these levels, there are also protective factors. Protective factors can include:

- Involvement in social activities such as sports.
- Olose relationships with non-deviant peers.
- Highly developed social skills, such as the ability to resolve conflict without violence.
- Being religious.
- Onnectedness to family or adults outside the family.
- Being able to discuss problems with parents.
- Commitment to school.

"PROTECTIVE
FACTORS
REQUIRE TIME AND
RESOURCES"



# Solutions to stopping gun violence

Reducing the risks and working towards increasing protective factors requires time and resources. It includes initiatives aimed at providing quality education, job creation, and support to dysfunctional families, teaching people skills to deal with conflict, challenging gender inequalities and dealing with alcohol and drug abuse.

As a short-term solution, we need to simply limit the number of firearms within a community to lower deaths caused by violence.

"GUNS ARE 18
TIMES MORE
LETHAL THAN
KNIVES. LIMITING
ACCESS TO GUNS
SAVES LIVES"

# Are guns effective for self-defence? Examining the evidence

South Africa's latest crime statistics show that serious and violent crimes have again increased. Between 2011/12 and 2019/20, murder increased 37%, attempted murder 27% and aggravated robbery 43%. A shocking 45% of murders in 2019/20 for which the weapon is known were gun-related, followed by knives at 28%.

"MOST SOUTH
AFRICANS FEAR THEY
WILL BE ATTACKED
IN THEIR HOMES AND
NEIGHBOURHOODS"

Increasing levels of violent crime and easy access to weapons places South Africa at number 123 out of 163 countries in the 2020 Global Peace Index.

People living in South Africa are scared. A StatsSA Victims of Crime Survey found that people fear being attacked in their homes and neighbourhoods. One-third of households surveyed don't go to open spaces or parks for fear of crime, while just less than a quarter do not allow children to play outside for the same reason.

As such, people are looking for ways to protect themselves, their families and their possessions. One way for some is to buy a gun for self-defence.

## Gun ownership and use in SA

The majority of licensed gun owners in South Africa are older men who own a handgun for self-defence against 'stranger danger' armed criminals:

- 81% of legal gun owners are men.
- 64% of licensed gun owners are over the age of 50.
- 49% of legally owned guns are handguns (pistols or revolvers).
- The majority of legally owned guns are licensed for selfdefence purposes.

In contrast, the majority of the perpetrators and victims of gunrelated crimes in South Africa are young men who shoot or are shot with a handgun during an interpersonal argument with someone they know:

- 45% of murder victims in South Africa are aged between 15-29, while 56% of those accused of murder with a gun are between 12-24.
- 89% of gun murder victims are boys or men.



81%
THE PERCENTAGE
OF LEGAL GUN
OWNERS WHO
ARE MEN

- Between 1999/2000 and 2013/14, handguns were used in 94% of murders in which a gun was used.
- The majority of murders in South Africa result from arguments between people who know one another, with alcohol often present.

Why is it that handguns bought by older men for self-defence against 'stranger danger' criminals are used by young men to shoot other young men they know? Answering this involves examining whether guns bought for self-defence are actually used for this purpose.



89%
THE PERCENTAGE
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#### Guns for self-defence

Research internationally and in South Africa shows that while having a gun might make you feel safer, it doesn't make you safer:

- Guns are rarely used in self-defence against a criminal attack. This is because criminals choose the time and place of attack very carefully, making sure their victim is vulnerable and outnumbered, to increase the success of a crime.
- A gun in the home is more likely to be used to commit murder, suicide or to threaten and intimidate someone known to the shooter – an acquaintance, friend, family member or even spouse – than to successfully protect against an intruder.
- You are four times more likely to have your gun stolen from you than to use it in self-defence.
- If you shoot at armed criminals they will shoot back 100% of the time, putting your life and the lives of bystanders at risk.
- Guns are highly prized and are targeted by criminals. Civilians in South Africa reported the loss or theft of 8,007 guns in 2019/20 — an average of 22 guns every day. The police lost 673 guns (2 a day) in this time.

"HAVING A GUN ENDANGERS YOURSELF AND YOUR FAMILY AND HELPS TO ARM CRIMINALS"

## What the experts advise

Rob Dale, Managing Executive of private security company Fidelity ADT, says the only time a firearm will be effective for self-defence is if a gun owner is ready and waiting for the criminal with the gun cocked and the hammer back.

"Unfortunately these things don't come with warnings. You are not given 90 seconds to go to the safe and get it out".

Instead of resisting a criminal attack, experts advise not fighting back. Your life is more important than your possessions.

#### Hijacking:

The Automobile Association of South Africa (AA) advises that you should always comply with the hijackers, while keeping your hands visible so the hijackers know you are not armed.

#### Home invasions:

Stay calm, speak slowly, avoid swift movement and keep your hands in sight so that the intruders do not become nervous or think you are attempting to wield a hidden weapon. Fighting back raises the risk of injury.

"YOUR LIFE IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN YOUR POSSESSIONS, NEVER RESIST IN A CRIMINAL ATTACK"



South Africa's criminal law allows for the use of force in very specific circumstances. The courts will take into account a range of factors when deciding whether an act of self-defence is legal, especially when lethal force (such as shooting a criminal dead) is used.

## **Facts**





88%

THE PERCENTAGE OF MEN WHO COMMIT SUICIDE WITH A GUN IN SA



# 15-29 YEARS

45% OF MURDER VICTIMS IN SA ARE YOUNG MEN AGED BETWEEN 15–29 YEARS



90%

THE PERCENTAGE OF GUN OWNERS IN SA THAT ARE CIVILIAN

81%

THE PERCENTAGE OF THE 1.8M CIVILIAN GUN OWNERS IN SA WHO ARE MEN



# **Myths**

## X Myth: Guns are effective for self-defence.

Fact: While a gun may make you feel safer, it doesn't make you safer. A gun is hardly ever used in self-defence, instead it increases the risk to you and your family and helps arm criminals.

## Myth: Men will always turn to verbal aggression or physical violence in order to protect their loved ones.

**Fact:** Physical violence is a choice, regardless of gender. Not all men deal with conflict through verbal and physical aggression.

## X Myth: Men should protect women.

Fact: This kind of thinking reinforces the stereotype that women are weak and need physical projection from men who are considered stronger.

## X Myth: Vulnerability in men shows weakness.

Fact: Vulnerability often requires courage. Societies must create space for young boys and men to be vulnerable and see strength in gentleness. There are many ways to be a man that are not violent.

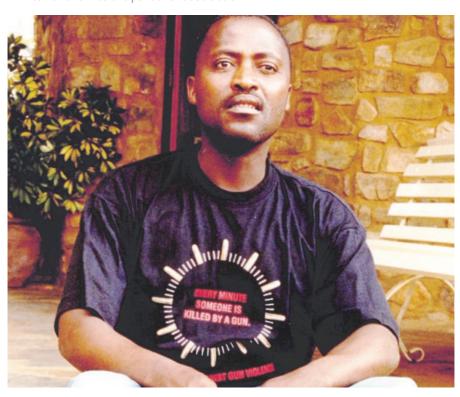
"MOST VIOLENT CRIMES ARE COMMITTED BY MEN"



## Take action

- Challenge male stereotypes by celebrating men who express their feelings, respect women and deal with conflict in a non-aggressive way.
- Challenge the myth that guns are effective for selfdefence by highlighting the risks of gun ownership.
- Create men's groups that allow men to speak openly about their feelings and frustrations and discuss what it means to be a man in South Africa today.
- Explore alternative ways to keep you and your family safe from violence. Organise community policing forums and motivate for interventions to make your neighbourhood safer e.g. more lighting or community patrols.
- Support campaigns aimed at reducing gun violence, in particular gun amnesty and public gun-destruction campaigns. Encourage anyone in your life who owns a gun to hand it in to the police for destruction.

"EXPLORE OTHER WAYS TO KEEP YOU AND YOUR FAMILY SAFE FROM VIOLENCE"





Morez			