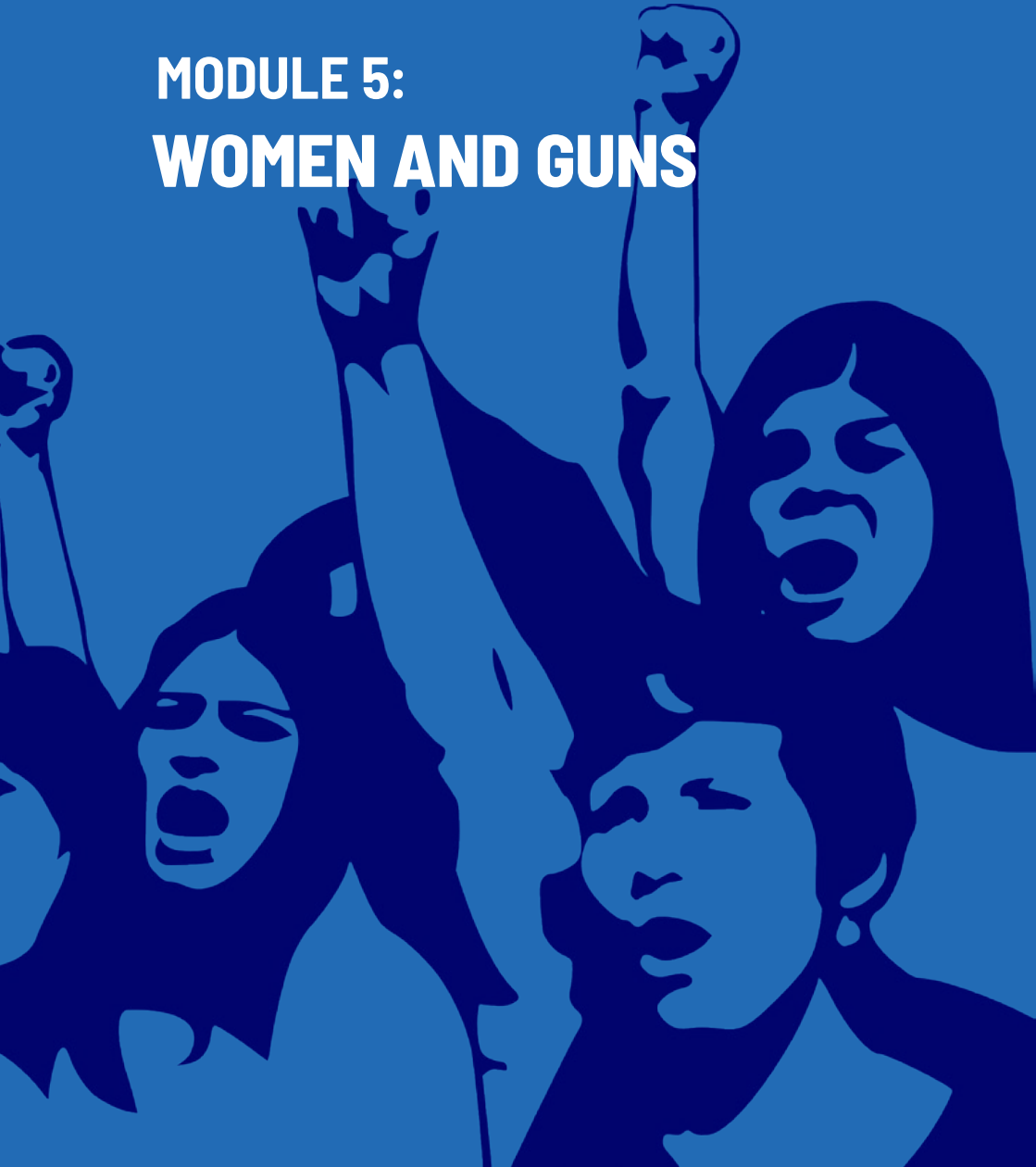


**MODULE 5:
WOMEN AND GUNS**



Women and guns

Women make up 11% of all gun-related murder victims in South Africa. Most South African women who fall victim to gun violence are killed with a legal gun owned by an intimate partner – a current or former husband, boyfriend, same-sex partner or rejected would-be lover. This is called intimate femicide.

In many areas of South Africa, women are perceived to have lower social value and power, and that men have the right to control women. This can lead to intimate partner violence (IPV).

IPV is a particular form of gender-based violence, and includes physical, sexual, and emotional abuse and controlling behaviours by a current or former intimate partner or spouse.

Research shows that living in a house with a gun increases the risk of gun violence. In cases of intimate partner assault, death is 12 times more likely if there is a gun involved.

"MOST SOUTH AFRICAN WOMEN WHO FALL VICTIM TO GUN VIOLENCE ARE KILLED BY AN INTIMATE PARTNER"

WHAT IS...



GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE (GBV)?

GBV is violence that is directed at a person based on his or her biological sex, or gender identity. Examples of gender-based violence include sexual abuse of children, rape, intimate partner violence, sexual assault and harassment, trafficking of women and girls, and harmful traditional practices such as early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

Guns in the home

A gun in the home significantly increases the risk of death or injury. Guns are easy to use and will often be used to intimidate during an argument and threaten women into submission.

Gun use in intimate partner violence usually escalates over time. In fact, international research shows that most victims of femicide have been threatened with a firearm before they were shot. The four main types of threatening gun-related behaviour used by men are:

- Threatening to shoot their partner.
- Cleaning, holding or loading a gun during an argument.
- Threatening to shoot a person or pet the partner cares about.
- Shooting a gun during an argument with their partner.



"GUNS ARE OFTEN USED TO INTIMIDATE DURING AN ARGUMENT"

DID YOU KNOW?



Intimate partner violence and gun deaths are particularly high in families where men use a gun for work, such as in the police, army or private security industry.

WHAT IS...

A PROTECTION ORDER?



You can apply for a protection order if you are in an abusive or violent domestic relationship. A protection order is a court order that tells an abuser to stop the abuse and sets certain conditions preventing the abuser from harassing or abusing the victim again. You can start the process by visiting your nearest police station. Make sure the protection order requires that the abuser's gun is seized.

How to stop intimate partner violence

IPV is so entrenched in our society that preventing it and other forms of GBV are long-term objectives.

There are laws that can be used to help protect a woman, and help change the norms around violence in our society.

Laws protecting women against gun violence

The Domestic Violence Act and the Firearms Control Act allow a court or the police to take guns away from abusive gun owners. Any woman who lives in fear of a gun in her house can request the local magistrate's court or police station to remove the gun immediately, even if she does not have a protection order against the person threatening her.

"THERE ARE LAWS THAT ALLOW POLICE TO TAKE GUNS AWAY FROM ABUSIVE GUN OWNERS"

A gun owner is acting illegally if he:

- Threatens you or someone else with a gun.
- Threatens to hurt or kill himself with a gun.
- Is violent or has been violent in the past.
- Has been convicted of a violent or sexual offence.
- Has a final protection order issued against him under the Domestic Violence Act.
- Does not carry or store his gun safely as required by the law.
- Handles his gun while under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

THE OSCAR PISTORIUS TRIAL



The case of Oscar Pistorius, the former Paralympian who was convicted of killing his girlfriend Reeva Steenkamp, shows how her death could have been avoided. During the trial it emerged that he once shot his gun out of the sunroof of a car while traveling with other passengers. On another occasion he discharged his gun while sitting in a restaurant – a public space. If action had been taken following these incidents, he would have been proven unfit to own a gun and his girlfriend's death may have been avoided.

How to remove a gun from a person



- Keep specific and accurate information about the irresponsible use of a gun before going to the police.
- Go to your nearest police station and speak to the designated firearms officer (DFO). Make a written statement describing how the gun is being misused. If there is no DFO, report the matter to a police officer on duty.
- The FCA allows the police to immediately remove a gun in incidents of domestic violence. If the gun is illegal it will be removed and the owner will be charged with illegal possession of a firearm. If it is a legal gun, the police must investigate the complaint.
- The owner of a legal firearm will be called to appear at a section 102 hearing at the police station. This is to decide if the gun owner is fit to own his firearm.
- If the officer finds the complaint is a true account, he can declare the gun owner 'unfit to possess a firearm'. The gun owner must then hand in all his guns and firearm licences, and is not allowed to re-apply for a gun licence for five years.



Prevention is better than cure

Experience shows that it is easier to prevent a person with a history of abuse and violence from getting a legal firearm than it is to remove a gun from a home after domestic violence has been reported. The FCA can prevent potential abusive partners from obtaining a gun in the first place.

As part of the licence application process, the applicant must complete a questionnaire which asks whether the person has:

-  Been diagnosed or treated for depression, drug and substance abuse or for behavioural or emotional problems, in the past five years.
-  Been divorced or separated from an intimate partner who they lived with in the past two years.

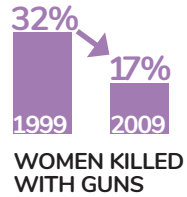
Police officers are also required to do three interviews with people known to the applicant, including their spouse.

"POLICE MUST CONDUCT AT LEAST THREE INTERVIEWS IN THE GUN LICENCE APPLICATION PROCESS"

How has the Firearms Control Act protected women?

Statistics show that between 1999 and 2009 there was a significant drop in intimate femicide in SA.

Researchers determined that this could only be due to the FCA because death by other means, including stabbing and other injuries, remained the same.



Facts



8 HOURS

HOW OFTEN A WOMAN IS KILLED BY AN INTIMATE PARTNER IN SA



17%

THE NUMBER OF THESE DEATHS THAT ARE FROM GUNSHOTS



83%

THE PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN WHO DIED AFTER BEING SHOT



68%

KILLED WITH A SINGLE SHOT, MOST OFTEN TO THE HEAD

Myths

- ✘ **Myth: The biggest risk for a woman is stranger danger.**

Fact: A national study found that more women (57%) were murdered by their husbands and boyfriends than by strangers.

- ✘ **Myth: You cannot tell when a woman is in danger of being killed by her partner or former partner.**

Fact: If there are signs of an abusive relationship and especially if there is a gun in the house, a woman is in danger of being killed.

- ✘ **Myth: A legal gun in the home protects women, it is illegal guns that are used in domestic violence.**

Fact: Research has shown that legal gun ownership significantly increases the risk of intimate femicide-suicide, with two-thirds (66%) of intimate femicide-suicide perpetrators in 1999 owning a legal gun.

- ✘ **Myth: If you safely store your legal gun at home, then there is no risk.**

Fact: No matter how guns are stored, what type or how many you own, having a gun in your home significantly increases the risk of death for you, your spouse and your children.

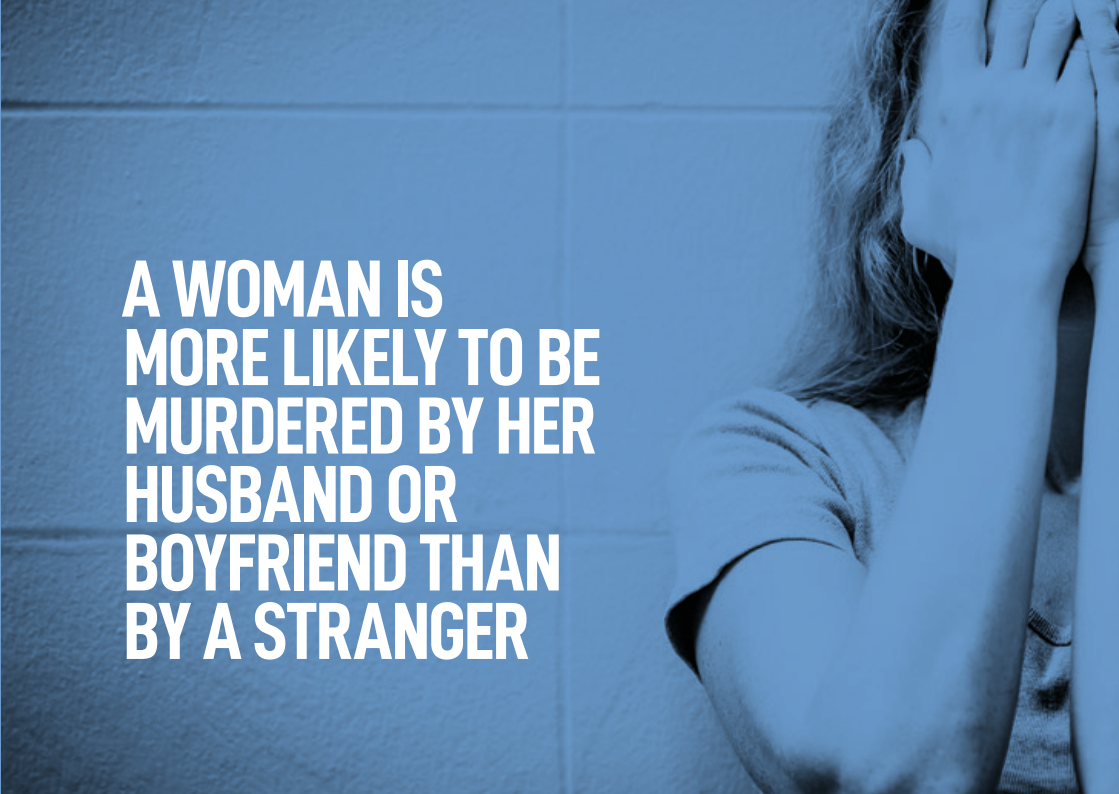


Take action

Gun violence prevention begins with you. Here are some ways to help:

- ✓ Know the law, use the law, save a life – If you or someone you know is in a relationship where there is a risk of violence, take action to have the gun removed immediately by the police or the magistrate's court.
- ✓ Don't turn a blind eye to gender-based violence – Offer support and seek help from an organisation near you.
- ✓ Stand up to men who are being abusive – We all need to say no when men are verbally, emotionally or physically abusive to their female partners. We need to spread the message that violence against women is unacceptable.
- ✓ Support the international #GunFreeValentine campaign – This runs from 14 February until 8 March (International Women's Day) and aims to alert women to the risks of a gun in the home and how the law can be used to remove guns from the home.

**"KNOW THE LAW,
USE THE LAW...
SAVE A LIFE"**

A photograph of a woman with long dark hair, seen from the side, covering her face with both hands. She is wearing a light-colored t-shirt. The background is a light-colored tiled wall. The entire image has a blue color overlay.

**A WOMAN IS
MORE LIKELY TO BE
MURDERED BY HER
HUSBAND OR
BOYFRIEND THAN
BY A STRANGER**

Notes
