

GUNS, CRIME AND THREAT

GUN CONTROL



TO GET YOU THINKING**READ THE PARAGRAPH BELOW AND DISCUSS THE QUESTIONS THAT FOLLOW:**

The way we describe people affected by violence and crime is important because it affects how we perceive what happened and the way we think about it. The words “survivor” and “victim” have very different meanings. The word “victim” makes us think about helplessness and pity, which might not adequately describe the experiences of some people who experience violence. Remember, experiences vary from person to person, after all. The term “survivor” makes us think that people are able to take control of their own lives. “Surviving” tells us that the person is still fighting, whether through the judicial system in order to bring justice to the perpetrator, to gain awareness for the cause or to learn to live after experiencing violence. A “survivor” thrives in their environment.

Article extract from: [Survivor vs victim](#)

 **QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER**

In your community, when someone has been affected by crime, are they described as a victim or a survivor?

Does it make a difference whether the person affected by crime is male or female in the way people describe the incident?

Do you think people feel more sorry for certain types of people affected by crime more than others? For example, how would your community describe an older person being affected by crime and a young person in his or her twenties being affected by crime?

In your community, what is the most common form of gun crime committed?

Remember to be respectful of sharing sensitive and private information. You can tell a story without giving personal details.



The law refers to a gun as a firearm

DEFINITIONS

CRIME

A crime is when someone breaks the law and can face punishment such as serving a jail sentence.

Source: Merriam-webster

SURVIVOR

A person who survives, especially a person remaining alive after an event in which others have died. It can also refer to a person who copes well with difficulties in their life.

Source: Oxford dictionaries

VICTIM

A person harmed, injured or killed as a result of a crime, accident or another event or action.

Source: Oxford dictionaries

WHAT IS A GUN AMNESTY?

A gun amnesty means that people who are in possession of an illegal gun can hand the gun in to the police without being prosecuted. It also means that someone who no longer wants their legal gun can hand it into the police. The Minister of Police and Parliament have to give permission for a gun amnesty to be held and they usually decide on the conditions of the amnesty and on the time period. South Africa has held several successful amnesties over the last twenty years.

Source: Gun Free South Africa

VIOLENCE

There are different types of violence:

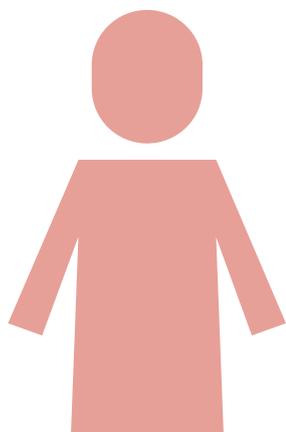
Self-directed violence, such as suicide.

Interpersonal violence, such as family and intimate partner violence. It also includes community violence. Other examples of interpersonal violence include, child abuse, elder abuse, youth violence, assault by strangers and violence related to property crimes.

Collective violence refers to violence committed by larger groups of people. War is an example of collective violence.

Structural violence refers to violence that is built into the structures of a society and prevents people from getting their basic needs met. Examples of structural violence include racism, sexism and ageism, which is discrimination against older people, and ableism, which is discrimination against people with disabilities.

Source: who.int/violence prevention



“The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in, injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation.”

THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION (WHO)

Remember

➤ **In South Africa gun ownership is not a right but a privilege governed by law. The Firearms Control Act sets criteria for ownership.**

MORE GUNS = MORE CRIME

Gun crime can be reduced by implementing:

- **Changes to systems and institutions:** This refers to creating and supporting an effective criminal justice system. The criminal justice system consists of three main parts: law enforcement (police), the courts (judges, prosecutors and defense lawyers) and corrections (prison, prison officials, parole officers).
- **Strategies to prevent violence and crime:** This must be done across sectors to influence productive behaviour. This can include, early childhood development, education, criminal justice, family care, health care, youth work and social services. When all of these work well and everyone has access to them, violence can be significantly reduced in communities.
- **Enforcement of gun control laws:** This helps reduce crime because it makes it difficult to access a gun.

Guns can be reduced by:

- **Using the law:** This refers to strengthening national gun laws that control and manage the sale, possession, safe storage and use of guns. Gun laws can make certain types of guns illegal for civilians to use. Gun laws can limit the number of guns someone can legally own and it can control the public carrying of guns.
- **Improving how laws are enforced:** This means that the gun law is enforced by government and its agencies such as the police and is obeyed by those who own guns.
- **Conducting firearms amnesties and collection schemes:** Civilian firearms amnesties and buy-back schemes are used by governments to remove illegal firearms from the public. When gun amnesty is combined with gun laws as well as awareness-raising activities, it can remove illegal weapons from circulation.
- **Managing government's weapons:** When state guns like those belonging to the police or the army are not properly secured, they can potentially flow into the illegal pool of guns.
- **Reducing demand for guns:** In countries with high levels of violence, weak criminal justice systems and where people have lost faith in the police, people's need for protection can drive the demand for guns. Therefore, making criminal justice systems more effective is one of the steps to reduce demand for guns.

DID YOU KNOW?

Controlling who owns what firearm and for which purpose will:

MAKE CRIME AND VIOLENCE LESS DEADLY, WHICH MEANS FEWER DEATHS AND SERIOUS INJURIES.

REDUCE THE RISK OF FIREARM MISUSE, ESPECIALLY IN THE HOME.

REDUCE THE RISK OF LEGAL FIREARMS LEAKING INTO THE ILLEGAL POOL OF WEAPONS AND INTO THE HANDS OF CRIMINALS.

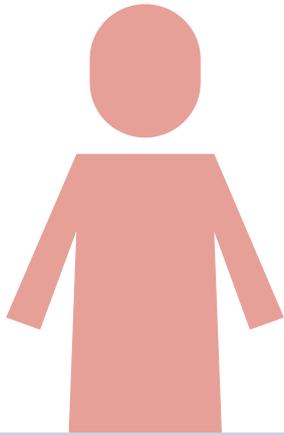
RISK FACTORS FOR GUN RELATED CRIME AND VIOLENCE INCLUDE

availability and easy access to guns
availability and harmful use of alcohol



Source:

2015 Firearms Control Briefing gun control and crime



"It does not matter whether we believe that guns kill people or that people kill people with guns—the result is the same: a public health crisis."

AN EDITORIAL BY A TEAM OF DOCTORS IN THE APRIL 7 ISSUE OF ANNALS OF INTERNAL MEDICINE

Remember

There are proven ways of preventing violence and gun crime. Being a gun owner does not prevent crime from happening to you.

IF YOU ARE A SURVIVOR OF CRIME THESE ARE YOUR RIGHTS:

- **The right to be treated with fairness** and with respect for dignity and privacy.
- **The right to offer information**, which means that you can participate (if necessary and where possible) in criminal justice proceedings, by attending the bail hearing, the trial, sentencing proceedings and Parole Board hearings.
- **The right to receive information**, which means that you have the right to be informed of your rights and how to exercise them.
- **The right to protection**, which means that you have the right to be free from intimidation, harassment, fear, tampering, bribery, corruption and abuse. If you are a witness, you must report any such threats to the police or senior state prosecutor.
- **The right to assistance**, which means that you have the right to request assistance and have access to available social, health, counselling services and legal assistance.
- **The right to compensation**, which refers to an amount of money that a criminal court awards the victim/survivor who has suffered loss or damage to property, including money, as a result of a crime by the person convicted of committing the crime.
- **The right to restitution**, which refers to cases where the court, after conviction, orders the accused to return your property or goods that have been taken from you unlawfully, or to repair the property or goods that have been unlawfully damaged, in order to restore the position you were in before the offence.

Source: Service charter for victims of Crime

EXTRA RESOURCES ON THIS TOPIC

- **South African Police Service (SAPS) Emergency Number: 10111 Lifeline**
- **National Toll free counselling helpline: 0861322322**
- **The South African depression and anxiety group (SADAG) 24hr Helpline 0800 12 13 14 SMS 31393 (and SADAG will call you back)**

MYTHBUSTERS**MYTH**

If there are no guns, criminals will use other weapons to commit crime

Guns make a country safer from crime

FACT

Guns are small, light, easy to use, easy to conceal and are most often the weapon of choice of criminals. They are more lethal than any other weapon, resulting in more deaths and a greater number of injuries. Evidence for this is found in both South Africa and globally.

Studies have shown a significant link between gun ownership and firearm-related deaths.

Source: Guns are a public health risk

DIFFERENT WAYS TO TALK ABOUT GUNS AND CRIME

These questions can help guide your radio shows and outreach.

They are angles to the bigger topic of guns, crime and threat

You have many examples of how to develop your outreaches and radio shows from previous guides. Use them to expand on some of the angles below.



What are the ways we can prevent gun crime from happening in our community?



What are the ways that guns change how a crime is committed?



In what ways do more guns increase gun crime?



What are the biggest failings OR successes of the criminal justice system that you can see in your community?

**EXTRA
RESOURCES ON
THIS TOPIC:**

- > Internet Resources:**
www.youtube.com (SA victim charter)
www.youtube.com (Once upon a crime)
www.youtube.com (Jacob Moshokoa looks at gun violence in SA)