

# Firearm Threat among Community Women Experiencing Intimate Partner Violence

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# Thank you!

With gratitude, we would like to acknowledge the women who participated in this study who shared their deeply personal experiences and entrusted us with their information; It is for these women and others like them that this project was conducted.

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*Advancing Gun Policy: Linking Multi-Source Data to Develop Micro-longitudinal Trajectories of Domestic Violence Offenders' Gun Use and Impact on Victims*

Tami P. Sullivan, (PI), Christopher D. Maxwell (Co-I)

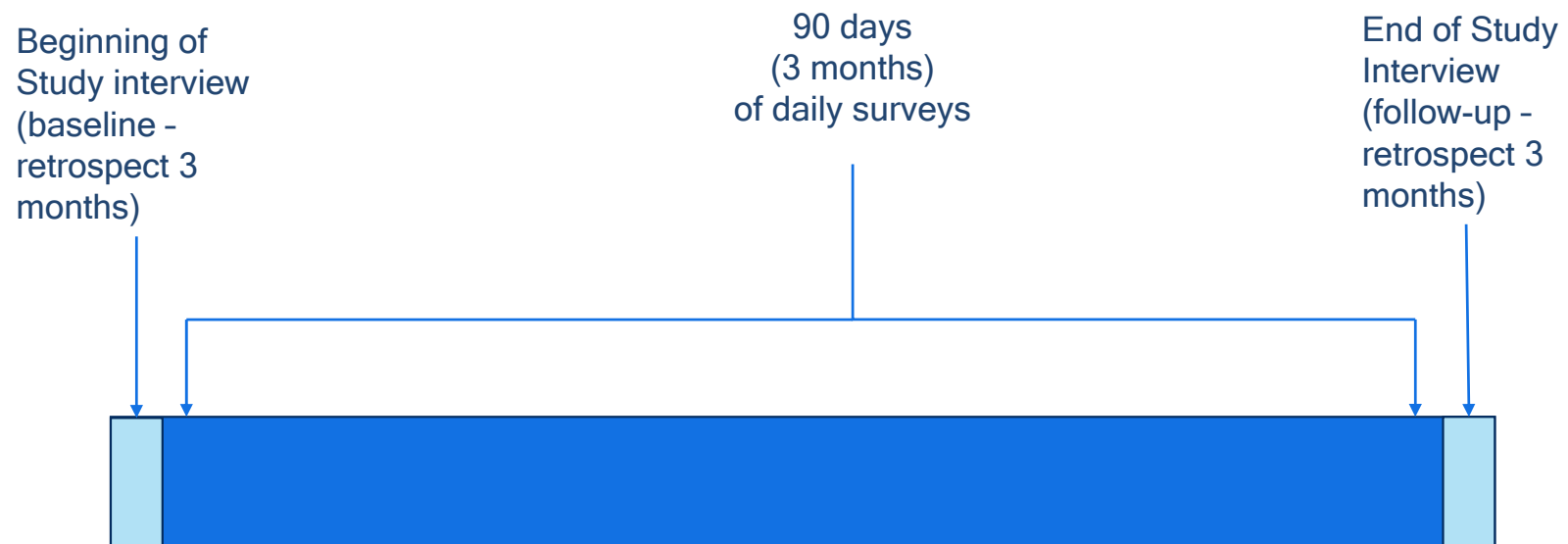
# Firearms & IPV

- Women experiencing intimate partner violence (IPV) have a greater prevalence of firearms in their homes than the general population.
- Majority of firearms and IPV research has focused on homicides and near homicides.
- Firearms also are used frequently in non-lethal ways to threaten, coerce and intimidate women.
  - No research on explicit and implicit threat.
- Existing IPV-firearms research had largely been retrospective and cross-sectional.

# Gap

- Little research exists to elucidate experiences as women live their lives - day-to-day.
- Micro-longitudinal research designs afford the opportunity to help us understand lived-experiences at the day level and identify factors that increase risk for or protect against firearm threat.
- This exploratory study aims to fill these gaps.
- This within-person day level information is needed to time and target interventions to prevent or reduce firearm-related harms and to inform policy.

# Traditional Study with Embedded Micro-longitudinal (Once-Daily) Study



# Micro-longitudinal Studies?

## Capture lived experiences (data):

- with great frequency
- in (near) real time
- in someone's natural environment.

# What are its Benefits?

- Reduces recall bias.
- Improves ecological validity.
- Allows researchers to identify things that are related close in time - and speak with greater certainty about the way things occur in real life.
- Can inform more precise interventions.

# How Were Women Invited to Participate?

## Study implemented during COVID

Recruited from the community via flyers “Women’s Relationships”

Who was eligible to participate?

- self-identify as a woman,
  - in a committed heterosexual relationship w/in past 3 months in which they experienced psychological<sup>1</sup> or physical<sup>2</sup> IPV,
  - read/speak English or Spanish, and
  - have a smartphone to download a free app
- Did I say during COVID? (supposed to be community, court, and DVSPs recruited)
  - Eligibility re: IPV
    - 49.4% eligible for experiencing psychological abuse alone
    - 50.6% eligible for experiencing physical abuse (which always co-occurred with psychological)
  - Surveyed once daily for 90 days - 16,104 responses



<sup>1</sup>Defined as endorsing at least 2 items from the PMWI-S (Tolman, 1999)

<sup>2</sup>Defined as endorsing 1+ items on the CTS-2 (Straus et al., 2003)



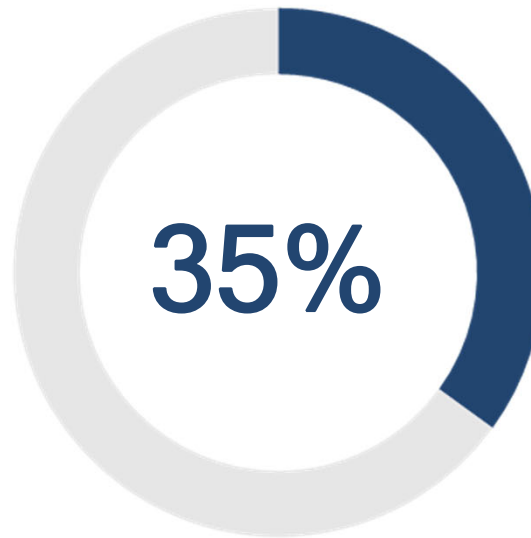
## 243 Women Participated

		Mean $\pm$ SD or % (n)
Age (years)		40.0 $\pm$ 13.2
Monthly income		\$2,987.44 $\pm$ \$2,960.95
Race	Black/African American	35.4% (86)
	White	25.9% (63)
	Hispanic/Latina	25.9% (63)
	More than one race/another race	2.5% (31)
Education	Less than high school	9.5% (23)
	High school degree or GED	33.7% (82)
	Post-secondary	37.6% (89)
Relationship length (years)		7.69 $\pm$ 8.4 (median = 5.0)
Living with partner	Yes	42.0% (102)
Broke up at least once in past 3 months		29.63% (72)

## IPV Experiences in 3 months Prior to Study Entry

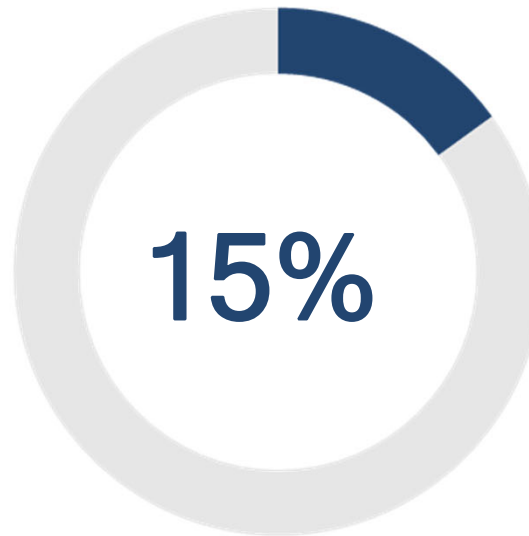
		Mean $\pm$ SD or % (n)
<b>IPV Experiences</b>	Physical IPV prevalence	48% (117)
	Physical IPV frequency/severity	9.2 (23.2)
	Psychological IPV prevalence	100% (243)
	Psychological IPV severity	35.1 (12.8)
	Sexual IPV prevalence (n=238)	29% (70)
	Sexual IPV frequency/severity	3.4 (11.3)
	Unwanted pursuit behaviors prevalence	63% (152)
	Unwanted pursuit behavior frequency/severity	13.9 (24.3)

## Baseline Data: Firearm Threat at the Person-level



experienced firearm threat by any intimate partner across their lifetime (90 women)

- explicit threat 20.2%
- implicit threat 33.3%



experienced firearm threat by their current abusive partner at some point in their relationship (39 women)

- explicit threat 3.9%
- implicit threat 14.7%

# Person-level Baseline Data: Explicit Threat Exposure Ever with Any or Current Partner

Explicit	Any Partner	Current Partner
Total	20.2% (52)	3.9% (10)
Pointed a gun at you	12.4% (32)	1.9% (5)
When he was either holding the gun or had it on him		
Said he was going to shoot himself	6.2% (16)	1.2% (3)
Said he was going to shoot you	11.2% (29)	1.6% (4)
Said he was going to shoot your family/ friends	5.4% (14)	0.8% (2)
Hit you with a gun	3.5% (9)	1.2% (3)
Held a gun to your head	5.4% (14)	0.4% (1)
Shot a gun to scare you	4.3% (11)	0.4% (1)
Shot at you (but bullet didn't hit you)	2.7% (7)	0.0% (0)
Shot you	0.8% (2)	0.0% (0)

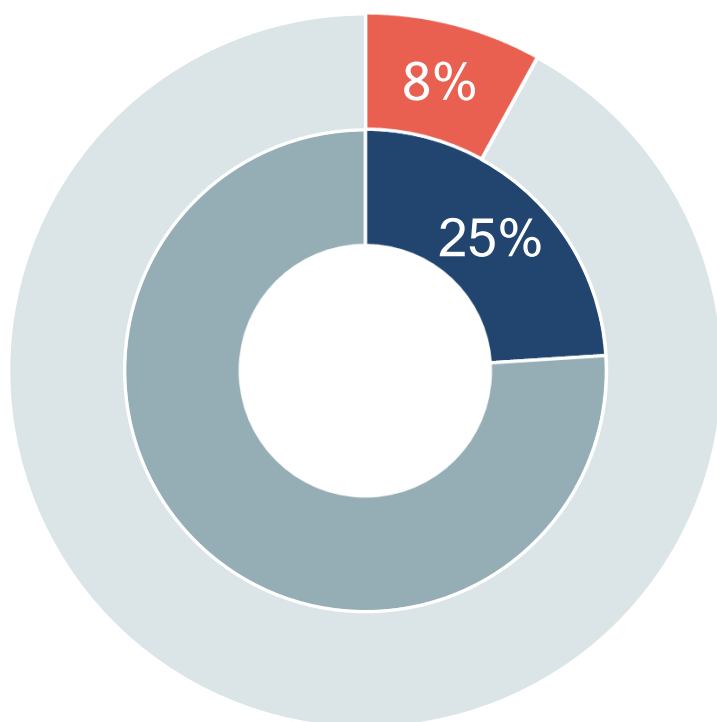
# Person-level Baseline Data: Implicit Threat Exposure Ever with Any Partner or Current Partner

Implicit	Any Partner	Current Partner
Total	33.3% (86)	14.7% (38)
Brought out a gun during an argument but didn't say anything about it		3.1% (8)
Waved a gun around		4.3% (11)
Said he would shoot you even when not holding a gun		9.3% (24)
Cleaned a gun in from of you or left a gun out to create a feeling of fear or to intimidate you		3.5% (9)
Other		2.3% (6)

Women experience 9 incidents of threat,  
on average.

For perspective, the range is 1 to 228  
threat incidents.

## Criminal Justice Involvement by Current Partner



8% of our participants had partners who were arrested with the participant as the identified victim in the charge.

25% of our sample had partners with a general criminal history.

# Criminal Records of Current Partner among Women Who Experienced FT by Current Partner at Baseline

## Firearm threat exposure by current partner, ever, reported at Baseline

	YES (n=39) % (n)	NO (n=219) % (n)	p-value <sup>a</sup>
<b>Criminal history of participants' partner (history/charges are <u>not</u> unique to the participant as named victims)</b>			
<b>All arrests</b>	<b>38.5% (15)</b>	<b>21.5% (47)</b>	<b>.02</b>
Violence	35.9% (14)	16.0% (35)	.004
Property Damage	35.9% (14)	12.3% (27)	<.001
Weapon	10.3% (4)	5.9% (13)	.3
Disorderly Conduct	35.9% (14)	17.4% (38)	.008
Drugs	28.2% (11)	13.7% (30)	.02
Probation	30.8% (12)	13.2% (29)	.006
Incarceration	25.6% (10)	10.5% (23)	.009
Court Violation	35.9% (14)	13.2% (29)	<.001
<b>Criminal history of participants' partner (history/charges <u>are</u> unique to the participant as named victims)</b>			
<b>All arrests</b>	<b>17.8% (7)</b>	<b>5.5% (12)</b>	<b>.006</b>
Violence	10.3% (4)	4.1% (9)	.1
Property Damage	10.3% (4)	1.4% (3)	.01
Weapon	2.6% (1)	0.0% (0)	.2
Disorderly Conduct	18.0% (7)	5.0% (11)	.004
Court Violation	10.3% (4)	2.8% (5)	.03





## Women's Reports of Their Partner's Willingness and Intent to Harm Them with a Firearm, and Differences between Firearm Threat Exposure Groups

		Firearm threat exposure by any intimate partner, ever, reported at Baseline			
		Overall (n=258)	Yes (n=90)	No (n=168)	p-value <sup>a</sup>
		% (n)	% (n)	% (n)	
Do you think he is willing to use a gun against you (endorsed at least one of the 7 items below) <sup>b</sup>		24.8% (64)	51.1% (46)	10.7% (18)	<.001
Do you think he is willing to:					
	Use a gun to scare, intimidate or threaten you	19.4% (50)	40.0% (36)	8.3% (14)	<.001
	Use a gun to avoid a breakup or to keep you from leaving the relationship	18.6% (48)	37.8% (34)	8.3% (14)	<.001
	Use a gun to hurt you	13.6% (35)	28.9% (26)	5.4% (9)	<.001
	Use a gun to kill you	11.6% (30)	25.6% (23)	4.2% (7)	<.001
	Use a gun to make you do something sexual with him when you don't want to	4.3% (11)	6.7% (6)	3.0% (5)	.2
	Use a gun to make you drink alcohol or use drugs when you don't want to	3.5% (9)	5.6% (5)	2.4% (4)	.3
	Use a gun to make you trade sex for money or drugs	2.7% (7)	4.4% (4)	1.8% (3)	.2
Do you think he intends to hurt you with a gun <sup>c</sup>		8.9% (23)	22.2% (20)	1.8% (3)	<.001

30% said they at least sometimes think their partner is capable of killing them.

9% believe their partner intends to kill them.

# Gun Ownership & Access



- 22% of current partners owned a gun at some point in their relationship
- 13% of current partners owned a gun at the time the women joined the study

Regardless of ownership

- 36% said it would be “very easy” for their partner to access a gun if he wanted to
- 42% said he could access a gun in less than a day

(this does not consider the 31% who said they didn’t know how long it would take)

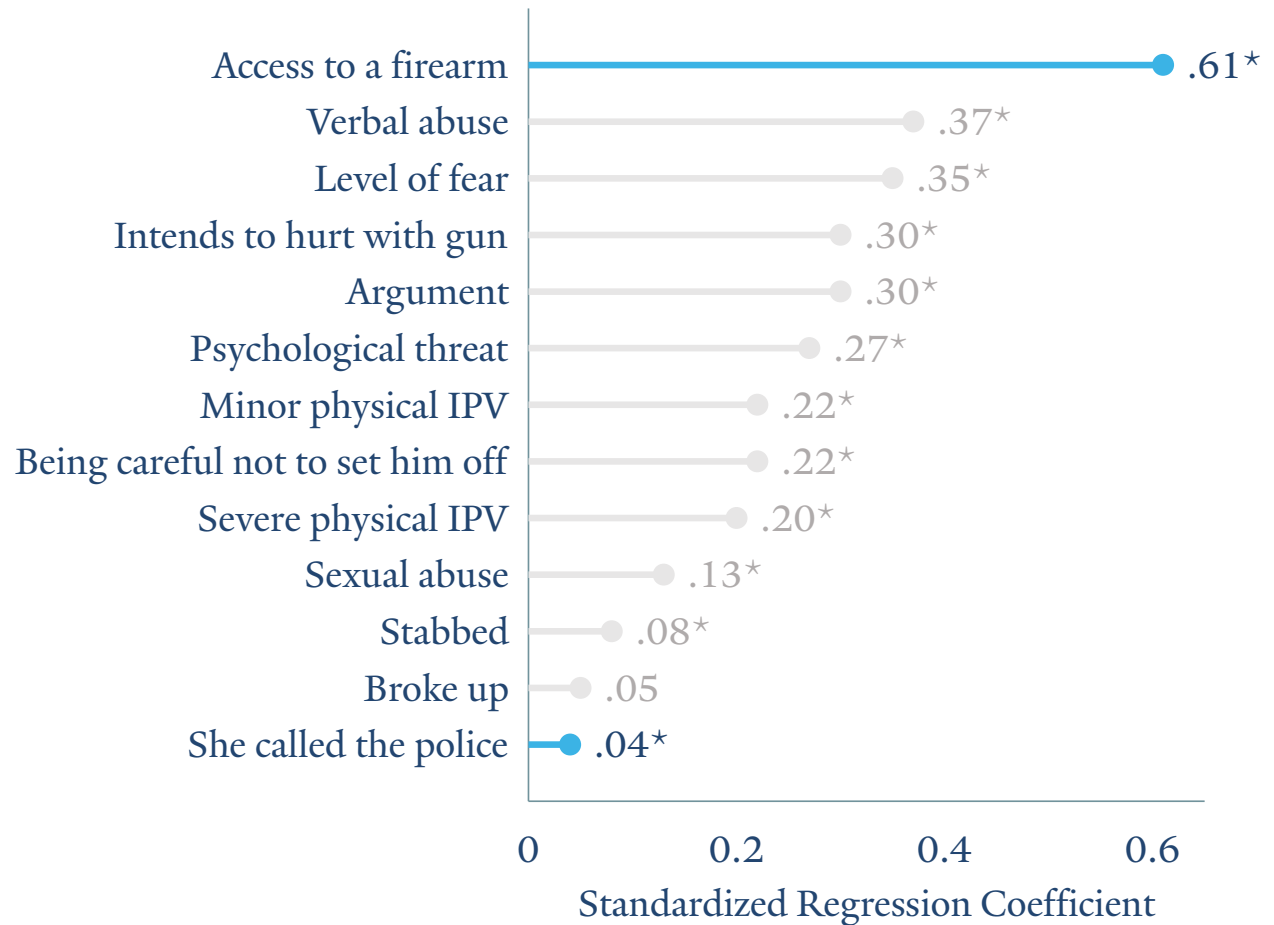
# Daily Survey Data

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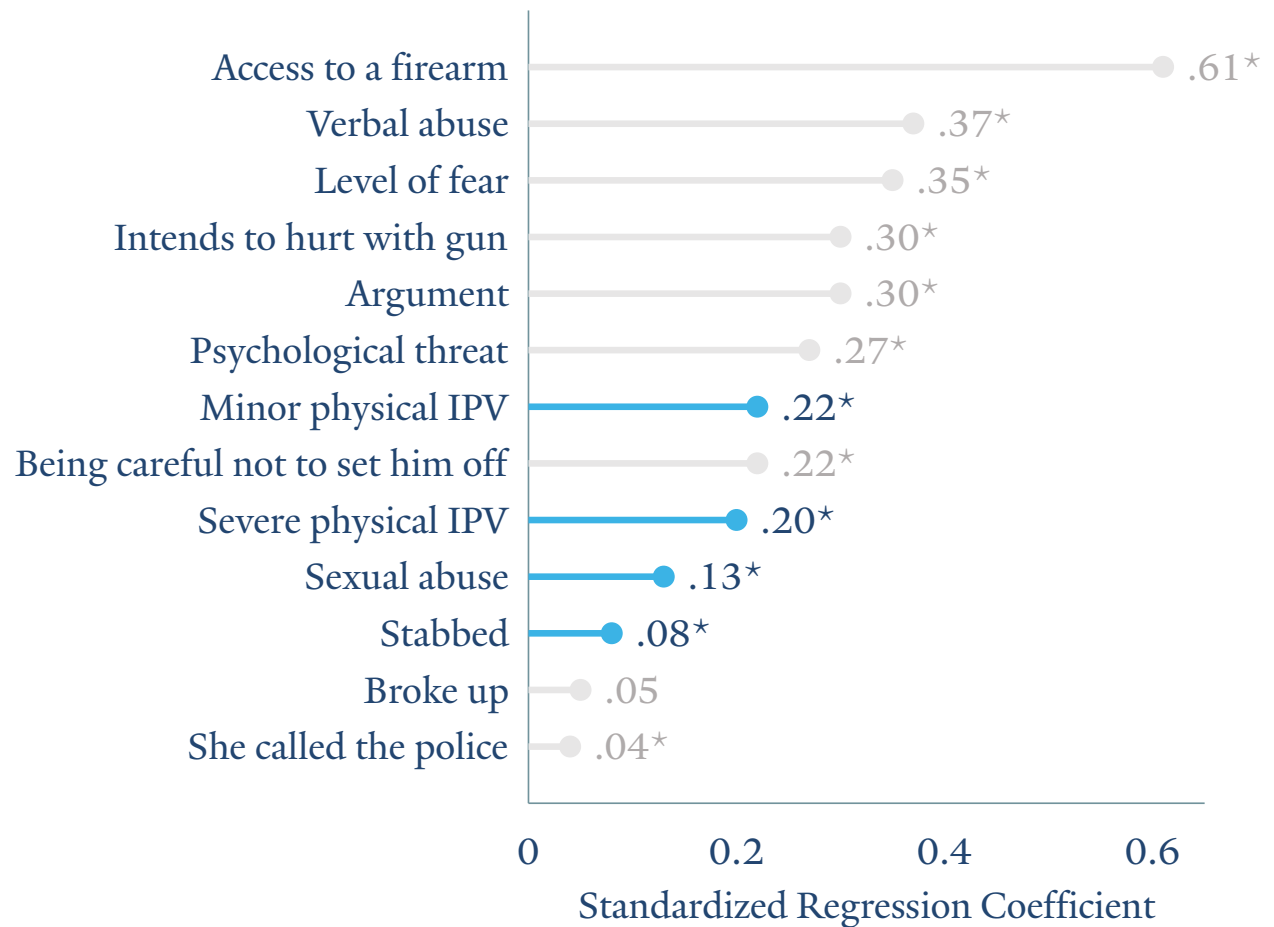
# Daily Data: Experiences of Firearm Threat Throughout the Daily Surveys

	Women % (n)	Surveys % (n)	Survey range per person
Any firearm threat	13.6% (33)	1.2% (6.0)	0-79%
Threatened with a gun	11.1% (27)	0.7% (2.7)	0-22%
Shot a gun to scare or harm	6.2% (15)	0.5% (3.9)	0-43%
Waved or showed gun in a threatening way	5.3% (13)	0.4% (3.0)	0-57%

# Day-level, within-person predictors of firearm threat. Firearm Access, Calling the Police

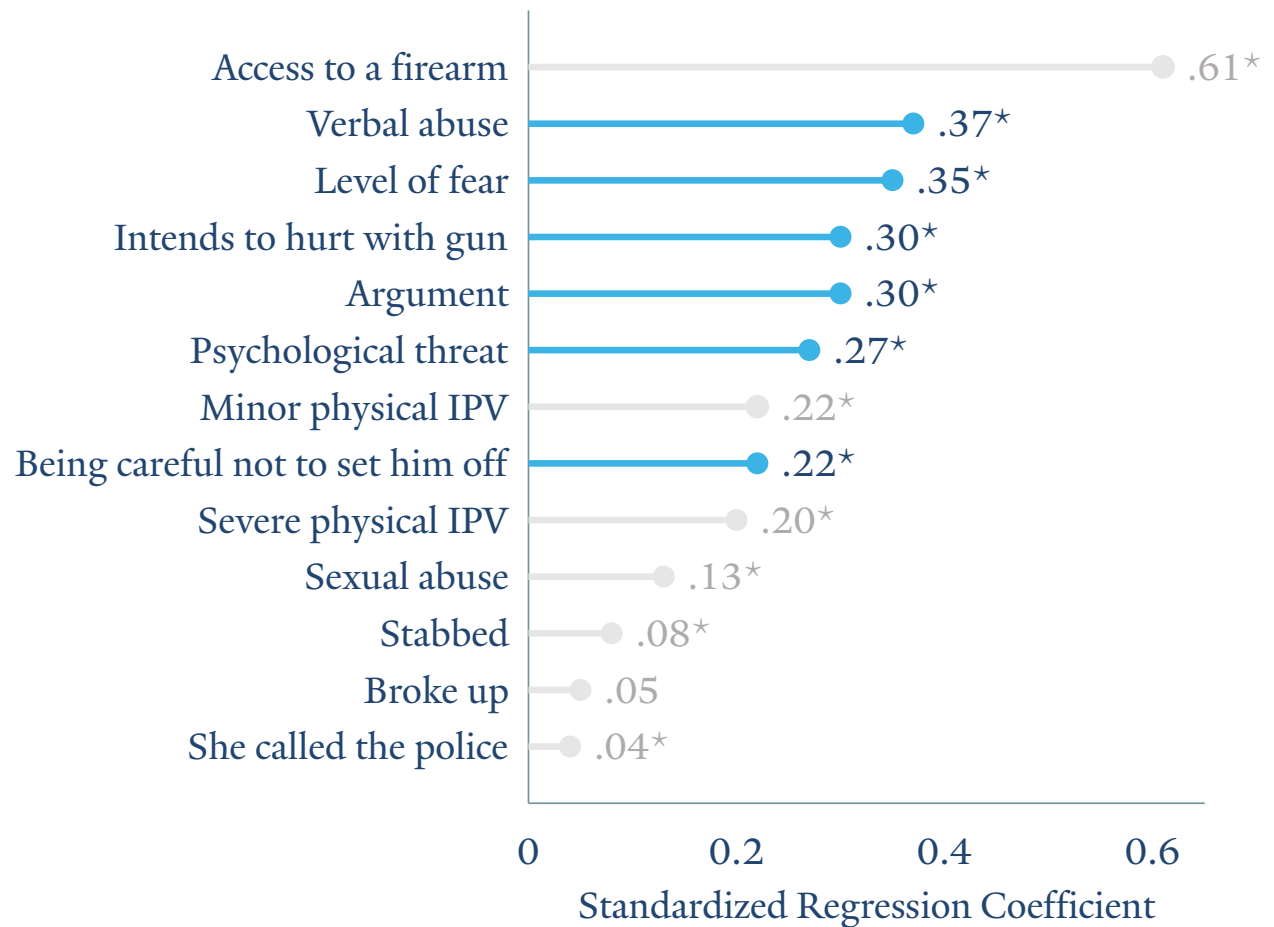


# Day-level, within person predictors of firearm threat. IPV Victimization



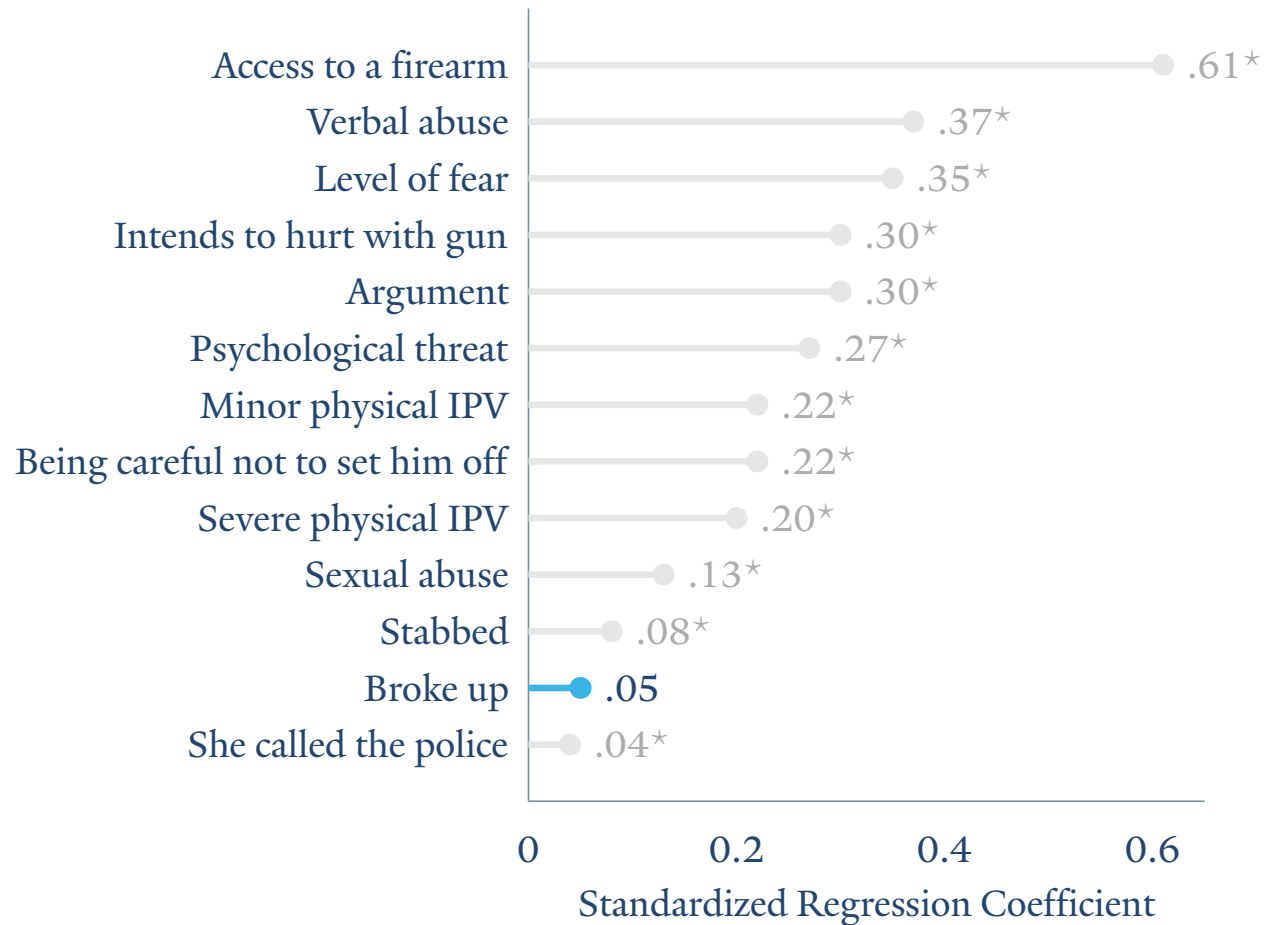


Day-level, within  
person predictors  
of firearm threat.  
Fear and  
psychological IPV



Day-level, within  
person predictors  
of firearm.

Breaking up did  
not predict...but  
it might not be  
an immediate/  
proximal  
predictor

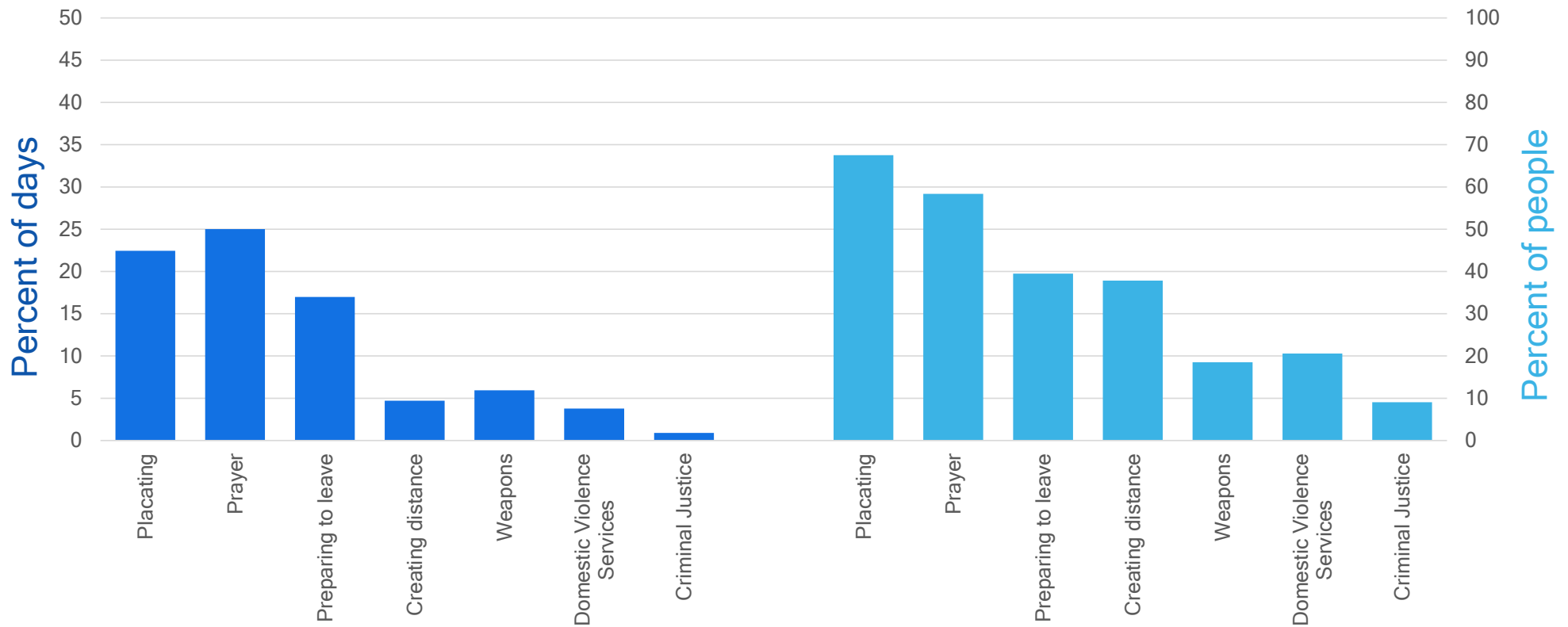


# Daily Surveys: Safety Strategies

"To stop, prevent or  
escape the conflict"

Safety Strategy Category	Items
Placating	Keep quiet Try to stay calm Pretend that nothing was wrong
Praying	Pray
Preparing to leave	Keep money or other valuables hidden Keep important numbers you could use to get help Keep important papers hidden Have an escape plan worked out Have a code so others would know you were in danger Keep car / house keys hidden Have a bag of necessities packed in case you need to leave quickly
Creating distance	End or try to end the relationship Stay with a family member or friend to keep yourself safe Change the locks or otherwise improve security
Weapons-related	Have a knife where you could get at it Have a gun where you could get at it Have another weapon where you could get at it Remove his gun(s) or keep it hidden so he couldn't get at it Remove other weapon(s) (e.g. knife) or keep them hidden so he couldn't get at it
Domestic violence services	Go to a support group Have a safety plan in place that you developed with a domestic violence advocate Stay at emergency housing / shelter
Criminal justice	Call the police Have a protective / restraining order in place, or one was issued

# Daily Surveys: Safety Strategies



# Placating Strategies

- Keep quiet
- Try to stay calm
- Pretend that nothing is wrong

USED BY **67.5%** OF PARTICIPANTS

USED IN **22.5%** OF THE DAILY SURVEYS

# Prayer

USED BY **58.4** % OF PARTICIPANTS

USED IN **25.0** % OF THE DAILY SURVEYS

## Preparing to Leave

- Hide money/valuables
- Keep important numbers
- Have an escape plan
- Have a code
- Hide car/house keys
- Have a bag packed

USED BY  
**39.5%**  
OF  
**PARTICIPANTS**

USED IN  
**17.0%**  
OF THE  
**DAILY SURVEYS**

## Creating Distance

- End or try to end the relationship
- Stay with family/friend
- Change the locks/improve security

USED BY  
**37.9%**  
OF  
**PARTICIPANTS**

USED IN  
**4.7%**  
OF THE  
**DAILY SURVEYS**



## Weapons Related Strategies

- Have a knife, gun or other weapon accessible
- Remove/hide his gun(s) or weapons(s)

USED BY  
**18.5%**  
OF  
**PARTICIPANTS**

USED IN  
**5.9%**  
OF THE  
**DAILY SURVEYS**

# Domestic Violence Services

- Go to a support group
- Have a safety plan in place
- Stay at emergency housing/shelter

USED BY **20.6%** OF PARTICIPANTS

USED IN **3.8%** OF THE DAILY SURVEYS

# Criminal Justice

- Call the police
- Have a protective/restraining order in place or issued

USED BY **9.1%** OF **PARTICIPANTS**

USED IN **0.9%** OF THE **DAILY SURVEYS**

# Percent of Surveys Characterized by Use of Safety Strategies

among women w/ and w/o firearm threat in daily data

	Experienced Firearm Threat in Daily Data N = 33		No Firearm Threat in Daily Data N = 210		Test Statistic
	M (SD)	Range	M (SD)	Range	
Prayer	49.0% (37.6)	0 – 100%	20.7% (32.4)	0 – 100%	$z = 4.17, p < .001, r = .27$
Preparing to Leave	38.1% (42.8)	0 – 100%	13.2% (29.8)	0 – 100%	$z = 5.07, p < .001, r = .33$
Placating	29.8% (34.1)	0 – 100%	20.5% (28.0)	0 – 100%	$z = 1.86, p = .06, r = .12$
Access to Weapons	14.4% (29.6)	0 – 97%	4.6% (18.0)	0 – 100%	$z = 5.64, p < .001, r = .36$
Creating Distance	8.4% (21.1)	0 – 86%	4.0% (11.8)	0 – 100%	$z = 2.56, p = .01, r = .16$
DV Services	7.5% (23.7)	0 – 100%	3.3% (12.8)	0 – 90%	$z = 2.39, p = .02, r = .15$
Criminal Justice <sup>a</sup>	0.3% (1.0)	0 – 5%	0.9% (7.8)	0 – 100%	$z = 1.34, p = .18, r = .09$

<sup>a</sup>Two items comprise this category. As a category, the difference between groups is non-significant. However, when analyses are conducted at the item level, differences between groups are revealed: Calling the police is significantly higher in the Experienced Firearm Threat Group  $M = 0.3\%$  ( $SD = 0.9$ ) vs. the No Firearm Threat group  $M = 0.1\%$  ( $SD = 0.6$ )  $z = 20.4, p < .001, r = .13$

# Summary

- Most used strategies are placating, prayer and preparing to leave
- Least used strategies are criminal justice and DV services

# Safety Protocol for Participation

## Future Intent

“ Do you think your (ex)partner intends to hurt you with a gun in the future? (from 1 ‘absolutely not’ to 5 ‘he absolutely intends to hurt me with a gun’) (triggered if  $\geq 3$ )

## Serious Threat

- “
- threaten to hurt or kill you with a gun?
  - wave or show you a gun in a threatening way?



## Serious Injury

- “
- stab you with a knife or other sharp object?
  - actually shoot a gun either to scare you or hurt you?

# Risk Flag Follow Up Options

During the baseline interview, we asked women what they would like us to do if they respond in a way that raises a risk flag?

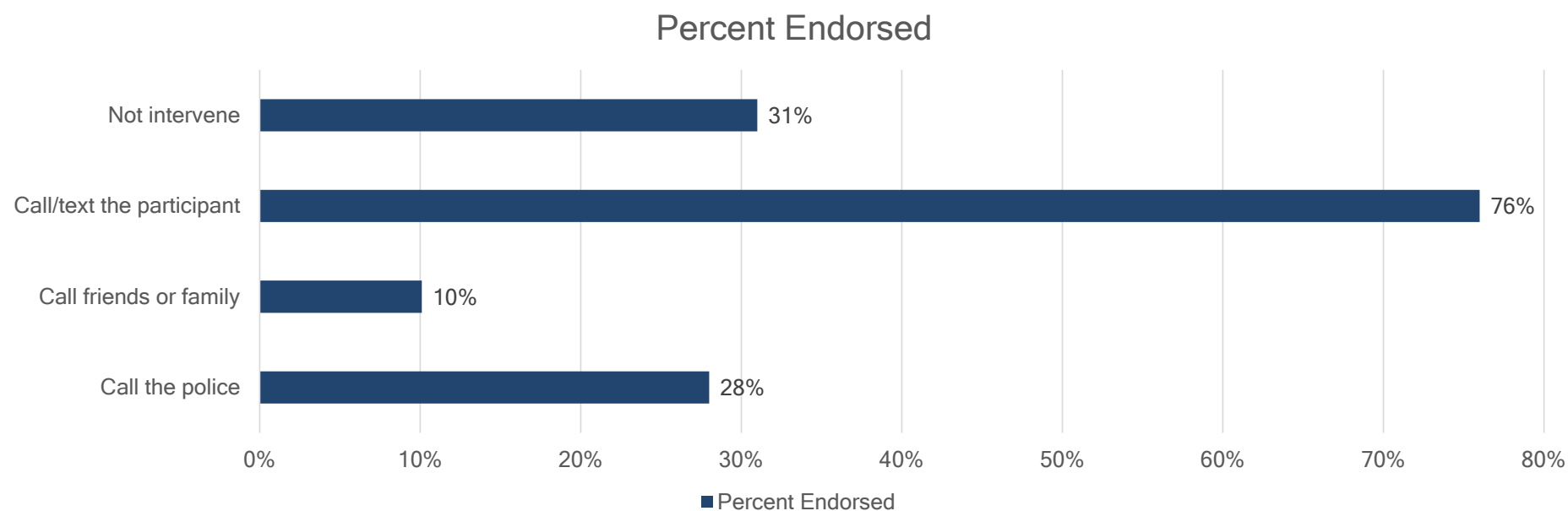
Options were to have us:

- not intervene
- text or call participant
- contact a friend or relative of their choosing
- call the police

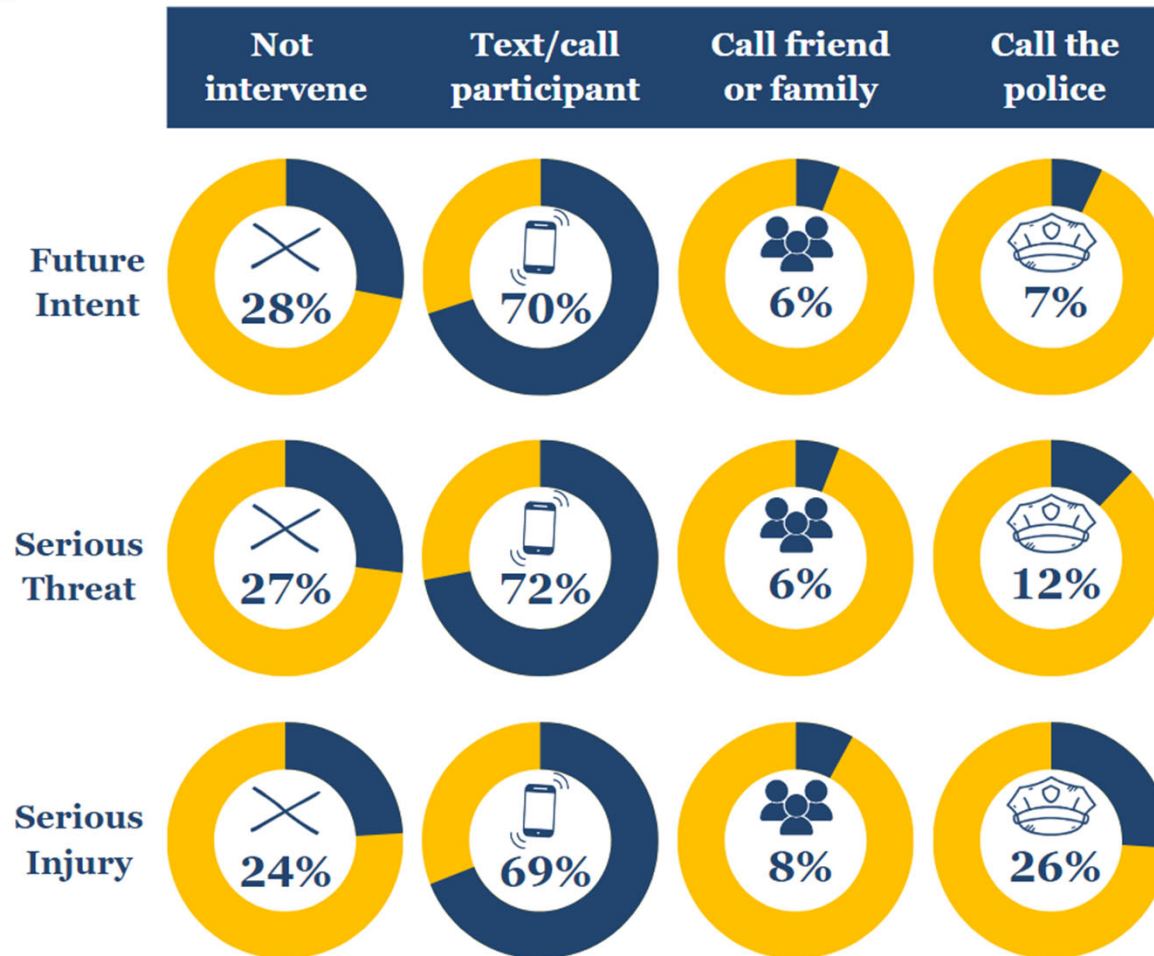
They could change their minds at any time throughout participation in the study.

# Follow-Up Options Selected

Follow-Up Type Endorsed At Least Once across All Risk Flags (n = 258)



# Follow-Up Options Selected



# Factors Associated with Follow-Up

## Future Intent Follow-Up Preferences

- A higher proportion of participants who had (vs. had not) experienced firearm threat by any partner in their lifetime preferred to have their friends/family called.

## Serious Threat Follow-Up Preferences

- A higher proportion of participants who had (vs. had not) experienced firearm threat by their current partner preferred to have their friends/family called.

## Serious Injury Follow-Up Preferences

- A higher proportion of participants who had (vs. had not) experienced firearm threat by their current partner preferred to have their friends/family called.
- A higher proportion of participants with children (versus without) preferred to have the police called.

\*\*\*\* Interpret findings with caution:

This study was largely conducted during COVID and largely included women recruited from the community (not court or domestic violence service providers), which means rates of IPV and firearm threat are underrepresented.

Thank You  
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