

STANDING OUR HOLY GROUND

A YEAR-LONG LOOK AT **GUN VIOLENCE** & WHAT THE FAITH COMMUNITY CAN DO ABOUT IT

Study Guide

The “Mental Health Myth”: The Role of Mental Health in Gun Violence & How the Media Often Gets It Wrong - PART 1

Timestamps

Opening Remarks

[1:05](#) - Common Understandings

[4:12](#) - Panelist Introductions

Panelist Presentations

[5:01](#)- Jennifer Bronson Statistician/Social Science Analyst, [Bureau of Justice Statistics](#)

Q&A

[37:49](#) – Based on the statistics, people who are incarcerated for a longer period of time are not more likely to be violent. The length of an inmate’s jail sentence does not necessarily contribute to greater violence. Is this interpretation, correct?

[42:14](#) – How do you recommend we become more media literate, particularly regarding news about gun violence?

[47:42](#) – Where should people turn for good, reliable statistical information related to gun violence? Also, given recent legislation, how has the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) been able to do more research than they did in the past?

Helpful References

Presbyterian Resources

[Presbyterian Peacemaking Program](#)

[Presbyterian Peace Fellowship](#)

[Standing Our Holy Ground Webinar Series](#)

Gun Violence Research

[American Public Health Association’s Public Health Partnership for the Prevention of Firearm Violence](#)

[American Journal of Preventative Medicine](#)

[Bureau of Justice Statistics](#)

[Everytown](#)

[Gabby Giffords](#)

[Gun Violence Archive](#)

[Moms Demand Action](#)



General Questions

1. How did this webinar engage your **mind**? What thoughts came to mind as you heard from the panelists?
2. How did this webinar engage your **heart**? What emotions and feelings did you experience while hearing from the panelists?
3. How did this webinar speak to your **soul**? What spiritual wonderings emerged while listening to the panelists?

Guided Questions

1. Which media outlet are your primary sources for news? When gun violence is reported on, how is it portrayed? How can you become more media literate when evaluating this information?
2. In discussing the example photo of a victim of gun violence in Cleveland, Jennifer notes that how the media represents victims and perpetrators in gun violence shapes how we, the public, “*think about criminality, risks, and think about who deserves to have their violence interrupted, to have a prevention program, to be treated, to be healed, to be healthy.*” Do you agree? Why or why not? How are victims and perpetrators of gun violence portrayed in your regular news sources?
3. Jennifer Bronson states that “*Mass shootings represent less than 1% of gun-related homicides which means that the media, and as a result, we in the general public and society, tend to miss a lot of information about gun violence and what it really looks like in America*”. Why do you think the media primarily focuses on mass shootings? How can we as consumers of media help shape the focus of media attention?
4. Jennifer Bronson states that research clearly does not support the claim that people with mental illness are more likely to commit an act of gun violence (or any violent crime) than those who do not. In fact, they are more likely to try to harm themselves or be a victim of a crime. Yet, when gun violence occurs, media often brings up the question of the shooter’s mental health. Why do you think this is the case? What are better clarifying or informative questions to ask to get a better understanding of the situation?
5. There is clearly a racial difference in how media portrays perpetrators of violence. The media often supports and reinforces the idea that Black Americans are somehow more criminal or more violent than White Americans. Whites are much more likely to have their crimes attributed to mental illness and to be portrayed as “*sympathetic characters*” while Blacks are treated as “*perpetually violent threats to the public.*” How do such depictions further contribute to issues of racism, poverty, and inequality in our society? As people of faith, what steps can we take to change this racialized narrative in our media?

