

GUN CONTROL WORKS

Gun Death and Injury Decline

In spite of an increasing focus on gang violence involving illegal handguns in Canadian cities, most gun deaths in Canada involve “hunting guns”. Gun violence, like cancer, takes many forms, and requires integrated solutions. While gun control measures are not a panacea, they reduce the risk of firearms misuse. All guns are lethal, and any gun in the wrong hands is dangerous. The fact is that firearm crime, death and injury have declined significantly in recent years as a direct result of increasing the strength of gun control measures.

Considerable research has shown that the easy availability of firearms in dangerous situations increases the chances of lethal outcomes, whether in terms of interpersonal violence or suicide. Non-restricted rifles and shotguns are used in homicides, suicides and unintentional injury, and account for a substantial proportion of firearms recovered in crime, even in large urban centres. While efforts to regulate firearms are often presented as an urban issue, evidence has shown that rates of firearm death and injury tend to be higher in areas with more firearms.

Gang-related homicides and crimes are only part of a myriad of issues associated with the misuse of firearms. Regrettably, there are no easy solutions to end gang violence. Appropriate strategies must begin with a careful and fact-based analysis of the problem.

Legal guns are misused by their owners, most often in cases of domestic violence, domestic homicide, suicide and accidents. For example:

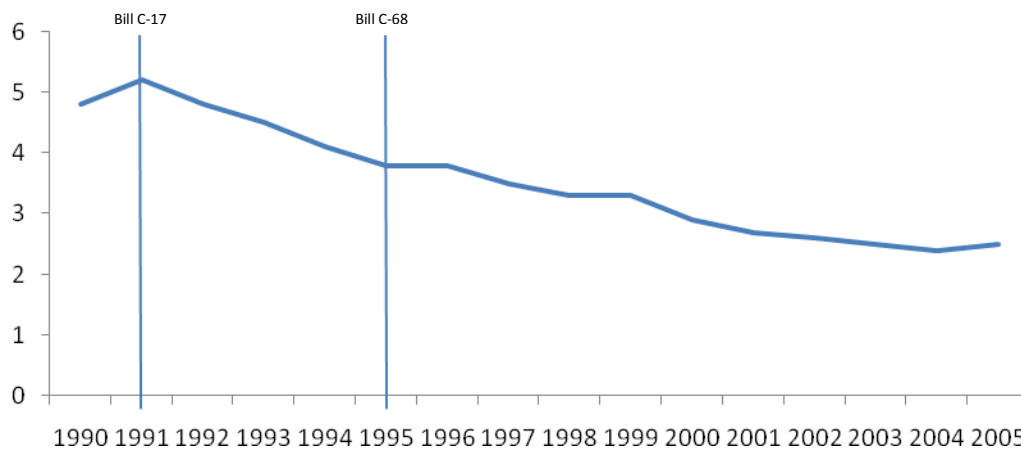
- Heidi Ferguson was shot and killed by her estranged husband, an avid hunter and legal gun owner, in Orangeville (Ontario) in September 2009.
- John O’Keefe, an innocent bystander walking home on Toronto’s Yonge st. in January 2008, was shot by a young gun club member.
- A Toronto Police Officer was shot with a shotgun by a man - the father of a Toronto police officer - who despite a history of depression had access to a legal shotgun.
- In October 2006, Mila Yoynova and her two daughters, Iva, 17, and Alice, 10, were killed by her husband with a legally owned handgun in Beaconsfield (Quebec).
- Anastasia DeSousa was killed at Montreal’s Dawson College in 2006 by a legal gun owner and gun club member armed with a semi-automatic rifle.
- Pauline Mattis, of Toronto, was shot in the face in 2003 by her husband who then turned the gun on himself. He had access to legal guns in spite of an extensive criminal record.

In Canada, rates of firearm death and injury have fallen with successively stronger firearms regulation, particularly those focusing on rifles and shotguns, the firearms most commonly found in Canadian homes.

- Non-restricted rifles and shotguns are the guns most likely to be used in domestic violence situations. Studies in Ontario have shown that, in abusive relationships, the risk of a woman being murdered increases substantially when firearms are readily available.¹ Canada's firearms legislation was designed to reduce the risk that abusive spouses will have access to firearms by improving screening (including spousal notification) and registering firearms. It also makes it easier to remove firearms when risks are identified. The Statistics Canada 2009 Family Violence study reported: *“The use of firearms, particularly rifles and shotguns, during the commission of spousal homicides has dropped steadily over the past 30 years. The rate for spousal homicides involving firearms fell 74% from nearly 3 per million spouses in 1980 to less than 1 per million spouses in 2009. Nevertheless, shootings were the cause of death in nearly one-quarter (23%) of spousal homicides between 2000 and 2009, second only to stabbings (41%).”*²

- Most firearms deaths in Canada are suicides (73% in 2007). In 1995, 911 Canadians committed suicide with firearms (rate of 3.1 per 100,000); in 2007 it was 534 (rate of 1.62 per 100,000). Suicide is the second most common cause of death in Canada for those aged 10–34. Overall firearms suicides have dropped by 52% since the introduction of stricter gun laws in 1991, and by 41% since the introduction of the Firearms Act in 1995, as of 2007.³ Studies have showed that keeping a gun in the home increases the risk of suicide by firearm.^{4 5} Consequently a critical dimension of suicide prevention strategies is to keep firearms away from individual who represent a risk to themselves, a measure which was explicitly built into Canada's Firearms Act.

Canadian Firearm Death Rate per 100,000



Source: Kwing Hung, "Firearms Statistics Updated Tables," January 2006; Statistics Canada, "Mortality, Summary List of Causes", 2000-2005.

Table 1 Number and average annual firearm-related death rates, by sex, age and Intention, in Canada (2000 to 2005)

	Annual average	%	Rate (100 000 inhabitants)
Total	819	100	2.6
Sex			
Male	759	92.3	4.9
Female	60	7.7	0.4
Age (years)			
0-14	9	1.0	0.2
15-24	128	15.6	3.1
25-44	277	33.8	2.9
45-64	282	34.4	3.7
65 or over	123	15.0	3.2
Intention			
Suicides	625	76.3	2.0
Homicides	155	18.9	0.5
Accidents	24	3.0	0.1
Police operations	7	0.9	0.02
Undetermined	8	0.9	0.02

Source: Statistics Canada, 2010.

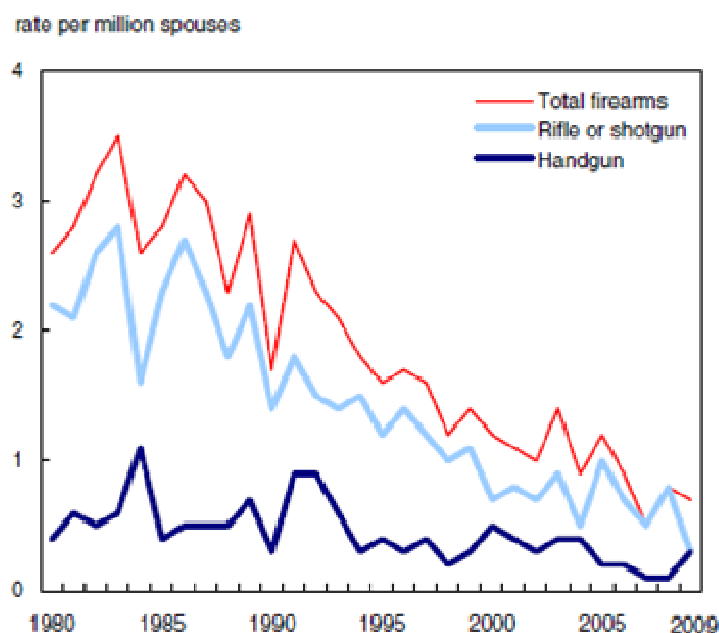
Source: Lavoie, Michel, Pilote, Ruth, Maurice, Pierre, Blais, Étienne. (2010) Brief Submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security Concerning Bill C-391, the Act to amend the Criminal Code and the Firearms Act. Québec: Institut national de santé publique.

Canada Firearm Death and Crime Statistics

Year	1991 Bill C-17	1995 Firearms Act	Latest Data	Change since 1995
Total Firearms Death			2007	
Number	1444	1125	723	-36%
Rate per 100,000	5.2	3.8	2.2	-43%
Total Homicide			2009	
Number	756	586	610	+4%
Rate per 100,000	2.7	2.01	1.81	-10%
Homicide with firearms			2009	
Number	271	176	179	+1%
Rate per 100,000	0.97	0.6	0.53	-12%
Homicide with rifles and shotguns			2009	
Number	103	61	29	-53%
Rate per 100,000	0.37	0.21	0.08	-62%
Homicide with handguns			2009	
Number	135	95	112	+18%
Rate per 100,000	0.48	0.32	0.33	+3%
Homicide without firearms			2009	
Number	485	410	431	+5%
Rate per 100,000	1.73	1.4	1.27	-9%
Spousal homicide (female) with firearms			2007	
Number	40	25	9	-64%
Rate per million	2.69	1.61	0.5	-69%
Spousal homicide (female) without firearms			2007	
Number	n/a	71	41	-43%
Rate per million	n/a	4.57	2.27	-51%
Total Robbery			2009	
Number	33,225	30,332	32,239	+6%
Rate per 100,000	119	104	96	-7%
Robbery with firearm			2009	
Number	8995	6692	4,835	-27%
Rate per 100,000	32	23	13	-43%

Source: Kwing Hung, "Firearms Statistics Updated Tables," January 2006; Statistics Canada, Mortality Summary List Cause (2007). Ottawa (ON): Cat no 84F0209XIE; Mia Dauvergne and John Turner, "Police-reported crime statistics in Canada, 2009," Statistics Canada, Juristat Vol. 30, no.2, July 2010; Sarah Beatty and Adam Cotler, "Homicide in Canada 2009," Statistics Canada, Juristat Vol. 30, no.3, October 2010 ; Statistics Canada. "Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile." Cat no 85-224-x, January 2011.

Firearm-related spousal homicides by type of firearm, Canada, 1980 to 2009



Note(s): Rates are calculated on the basis of 1,000,000 population. Populations based upon July 1st estimates from Statistics Canada, Demography Division. Includes legally married, common-law, separated, and divorced persons age 15 years or older. Excludes homicides of same-sex spouses due to the unavailability of population data on same-sex couples.

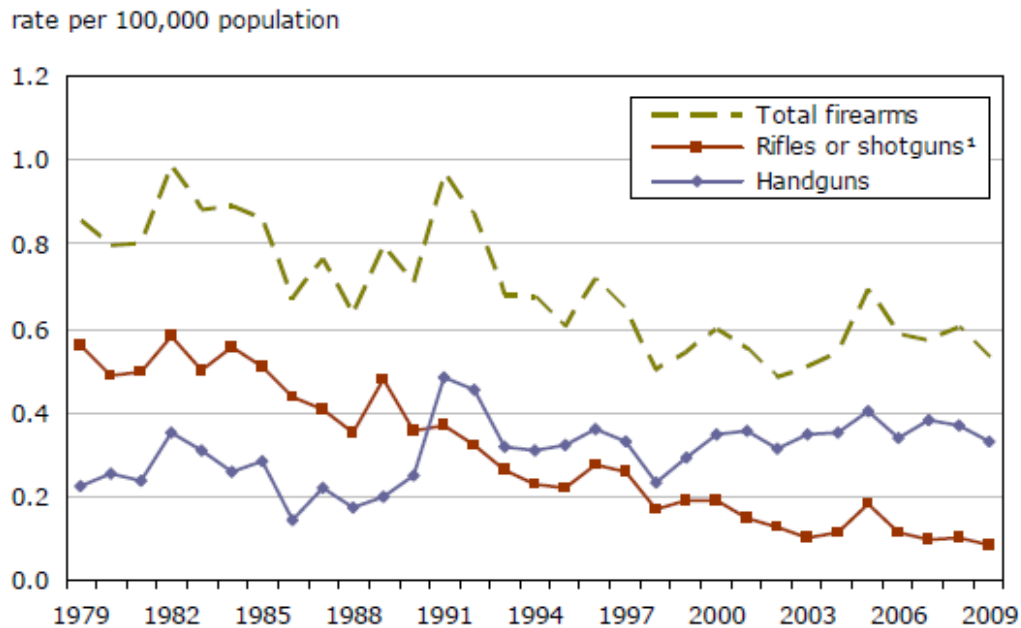
Source(s): Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Homicide Survey.

Canadian Crime Trends

- National homicide and firearm homicide rates are much lower than they were in 1991 when controls on rifles and shotguns were first introduced.⁶
- The rate of homicide with rifles and shotguns has plummeted.⁷ Legislation introduced in 1991 and 1995 focused on strengthening controls on rifles and shotguns. Since the inception of the Firearms Act in 1995, the rate of firearms homicide with long-guns has dropped from 0.21 per 100,000 (1995) to 0.08 per 100,000 (2009) while the homicide rate without firearms went from 1.4 per 100,000 (1995) to 1.27 per 100,000 (2009).²
- Homicides with handguns remain relatively constant, as many illegal handguns are smuggled into Canada, and less affected by national laws. Cook et al, in their 2009 study, reported that of the 327 handguns recovered in crime by the Toronto Police Service in 2006, 181 were traceable to their original point of sale, and of those, 120 (two thirds) were traced to the United States.⁸ Heemskerk and Davies also reported in their 2008 study that of 705 crime guns which were traced, 490 (69%) were traced back to the United States.⁹
- Robberies with firearms, which make up about 15% of total robberies, reached a 30 year low in 2007, and declined further in 2009, representing a 27% decline between 1991 and 2009.¹⁰

Total Firearm Homicide Rates, Rifle and Shotgun Homicide Rates, and Handgun Homicide Rates in Canada 1979-2009

Use of firearms declines in 2009



1. Excludes sawed-off rifles or shotguns.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Homicide Survey.

¹ Campbell JC, Webster D, Koziol-McLain J, et al. Risk factors for femicide in abusive relationships: results from a multisite case control study. *Am J Public Health* 2003;93:1089-97

² Statistics Canada. "Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile." Cat no 85-224-x. January 2011.

³ Causes of death. Ottawa (ON): Statistics Canada. Cat no 84-208.

⁴ Kellermann AL, Rivara FP, Somes G, et al. Suicide in the home in relation to gun ownership. *N Engl J Med* 1992;327:467-72.

⁵ Miller M, Azrael D, Hepburn L, et al. The association between changes in household firearm ownership and rates of suicide in the United States, 1981–2002. *Inj Prev* 2006;12:178-82.

⁶ Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics. "Homicide in Canada, 2009." Fall 2010. Vol. 30, no. 3.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Cook, Phillip. Cukier, Wendy. Krause, Keith. "The Illicit Firearms Trade in North America". 2009.

⁹ Heemskerk, Tony and Eric Davies (2008) 'A Report on the Illegal Movement of Firearms in British Columbia', November.

¹⁰ Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics. "Police-reported crime statistics in Canada, 2009". Statistics Canada, Summer 2010, Vol. 30, no. 2.