

GUN CONTROL WORKS

Gun Death and Injury Declines

In spite of the recent increase in gang violence with illegal handguns in Canadian cities, such as Toronto, the fact is that firearm crime, death and injury have declined significantly overall. Gun violence, like cancer, takes many forms and requires integrated solutions. Gang violence with guns is very different from domestic violence with guns. Regrettably there are no easy solutions. Appropriate strategies must begin with a careful and fact-based analysis of the problem. Gang related homicides and crimes are only one part of the problems associated with the misuse of firearms. Incidents of domestic violence with firearms are also important, as well as the misuse of guns by legal owners.

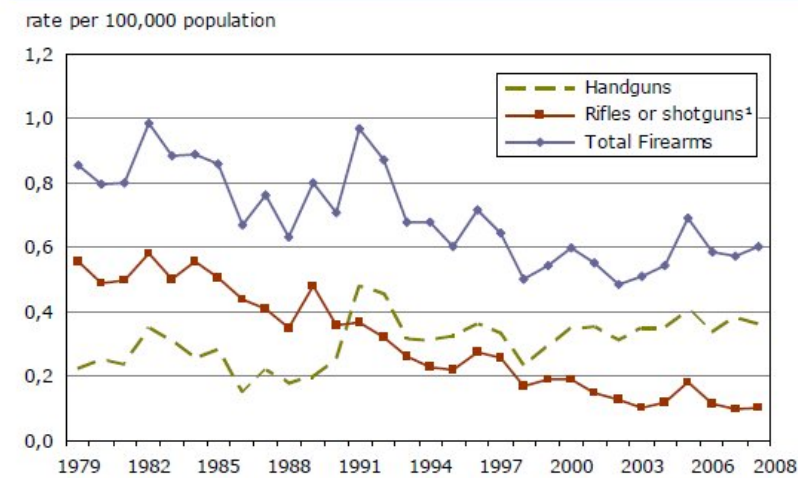
The last police officer shot in Toronto was shot by a disturbed man with a legally owned shotgun. Heidi Ferguson was shot and killed by her estranged husband, an avid hunter, and legal gun owner in Orangeville (Ontario) in September 2009. John O'Keefe, an innocent bystander walking home on Toronto's Yonge st. in January 2008 was shot by a young gun club member. Daniel Tessier, a Laval (Quebec) police officer, was shot and killed while on duty by a legal handgun owner who had failed to report his change of address in March 2007. 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.

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.¹
- The rate of homicides with rifles and shotguns has plummeted.² The 1991 and 1995 legislation 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 0.1 per 100,000 (2008) while the homicide rate without firearms went from 1.4 per 100,000 (1995) to 1.23 per 100,000 (2008).² Of firearm-related homicides in 2008, 17% were with rifles or shotguns, 60% with handguns, and 10.5% with sawed-off rifles or shotguns, and fully automatic weapons. Long guns were used in 72% of firearm-related spousal homicide.
- Homicides with handguns remain relatively constant because 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.³ 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.⁴
- Robberies with firearms, which make up about 15% of total robberies, reached a 30 year low in 2007, and remained stable in 2008, representing an 11% decline between 1998 and 2008.⁵

Total Firearm Homicide Rates, Rifle and Shotgun Homicide Rates, and Handgun Homicide Rates in Canada 1976-2008

Use of firearms generally increasing since 2002



1. Excludes sawed-off rifles or shotguns.

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

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Canadian Firearm Deaths and Injuries

- The number and rate of firearm deaths have decreased since 1991.
- Firearm use in spousal homicide has decreased by 36% since the 1995 implementation of the Firearms Act. Studies in Ontario have shown that in abusive relationships, the risk of a woman being murdered increases substantially when firearms are readily available.⁷ Unrestricted rifles and shotguns are the guns most likely to be used in domestic violence situations. Canada's firearms law was designed to reduce the risk that abusive spouses will be able to access firearms, by improving screening (including spousal notification) and registering firearms. It also makes it easier to remove firearms when risks are identified.
- Overall firearms suicides have dropped by 43% since the introduction of stricter gun laws in 1991, and by 35% since the introduction of the Firearms Act in 1995.⁸ Studies have showed that keeping a gun in the home increased the risk of suicide by firearm.^{9 10}

Firearm Death and Crime Statistics 1991-Now

Year	1991	1995	Latest Data	Change since 1995 (Firearms Act)
Total Firearms Death			2005	
Number	1444	1125	818	-27%
Rate per 100,000	5.2	3.8	2.45	-35%
Total Suicide Death			2005	
Number	3,593	3,970	3,743	-6%
Rate per 100,000	10.9	12.1	11.6	-4%
Suicide with Firearm			2005	
Number	1,109	911	593	-35%
Rate per 100,000	3.4	3.1	1.77	-43%
Total Homicide			2008	
Number	756	586	611	+4%
Rate per 100,000	2.7	2.01	1.83	-9%
Homicide with firearms			2008	
Number	271	176	200	+14%
Rate per 100,000	0.97	0.6	0.59	-1%
Homicide with rifles and shotguns			2008	
Number	103	61	34	-44%
Rate per 100,000	0.37	0.21	0.1	-52%
Homicide with handguns			2008	
Number	135	95	121	+27%
Rate per 100,000	0.48	0.32	0.36	+12%
Homicide without firearms			2008	
Number	485	410	411	--
Rate per 100,000	1.73	1.4	1.23	-12%
Homicide of women with firearms			2005	
Number	85	43	32	-26%
Rate per 100,000	0.3	0.14	0.09	- 36%
Homicide of women without firearms			2005	
Number	185	152	115	-24%
Rate per 100,000	0.6	0.5	0.34	-32%
Total Robbery			2008	
Number	33,225	30,332	32,281	+6%
Rate per 100,000	119	104	97	-7
Robbery with firearm			2008	
Number	8995	6692	4,536	-32%
Rate per 100,000	32	23	14	-39%

¹ Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics. "Homicide in Canada 2008". October 2009. Vol 29, no. 4

² Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics. Homicide survey, homicides involving firearms, by type of firearm, Canada. Table 253-0005. Ottawa (ON): Statistics Canada; 2008

³ Cook, Phillip. Cukier, Wendy. Krause, Keith. "The Illicit Firearms Trade in North America". 2009.

⁴ Heemskerck, Tony and Eric Davies (2008) 'A Report on the Illegal Movement of Firearms in British Columbia', November.

⁵ Juristat Article : "Police-reported crime statistics in Canada, 2008". Statistics Canada, July 2009, Vol. 29, no. 3

⁶ Sarah Beatty, « Homicide in Canada, 2008, » Statistic Canada Juristat Vol. 29, no.4, October 2009

⁷ 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

⁸ Causes of death. Ottawa (ON): Statistics Canada. Cat no 84-208.

⁹ 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.

¹⁰ 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.