

# COALITION

for Gun Control / pour le contrôle des armes

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**International Comparative Research on  
Legislations, Regulations and Procedures to  
Acquire, Possess, Sell and Transfer Rifles and  
Shotguns  
- Report -**

**June 2014**



## **Objectives of this report**

The objective of this report is to compare different countries' legislation regulating the acquisition, possession, sale and transfer of firearms<sup>1</sup> used for hunting.<sup>2</sup> With the help of the Thompson Reuters Foundation and lawyers, we collected information<sup>3</sup> from Australia, Brazil, Canada, Israel, Mexico, New Zealand, the Republic of South Africa, Switzerland, as well as the European Union (which has general common requirements on its territory) and France, Germany and England and Wales (which have more specific legislation). This report is a product of the commitment of the Coalition for Gun Control to undertake cutting edge research and support strong gun control laws and measures in Canada.

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<sup>1</sup> For the purpose of this report, the terms small arms, firearms, guns will be used interchangeably and refer to rifles and shotguns.

<sup>2</sup> This report is referring specifically to long guns (rifles and shotguns).

<sup>3</sup> References are contained later in the report.

## 1. Introduction

The illegal or illicit gun trade is a major source of guns used in conflict and crime. Virtually every illegal gun begins as a legal gun. For more than a decade, governments around the world have been working on collaborative strategies to combat the illegal gun trade. Strong national controls over firearms owned by civilians are an essential piece of the fight, which is why, in recent years, most industrialized countries have strengthened their controls on firearms and made international commitments towards combatting the illegal gun trade.

Among the international efforts to combat the illicit trade in small arms:

- The ***OAS Inter-American Convention Against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms (CIFTA)*** is a legally-binding, multilateral treaty, of which the Organisation of American States (OAS) is custodian. The Convention includes provisions on the marking of firearms, record keeping, confiscation or forfeiture of firearms, and the strengthening of controls at export points, as well as requiring member states to establish an effective system of import, export, and transfer licencing. CIFTA has 35 signatories and only three have yet to implement it: Canada, Jamaica and the US.<sup>4</sup>
- The ***Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, their Parts and Components and Ammunition (UN Firearms Protocol)*** was adopted in 2001 as part of the **UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocols** (2000). It constitutes the only global legally-binding instrument addressing the issue of small arms to date. It provides for a series of control measures and normative provisions covering multiple aspects of the small arms issue, including the requirement that States implement a series of control measures on firearms and ammunition such as maintaining records on firearms markings and transactions, marking firearms for the purposes of identification and tracing and establishing effective export, import and transit licencing systems. The UN Firearms Protocol requires mandatory marking not only at the time of manufacture, but also at the time of import to facilitate the identification and tracing of each firearm.<sup>5</sup> Fifty two countries have signed but not ratified the agreement (Canada and Australia). One hundred and nine countries have ratified it (Brazil, European Union, Mexico, South Africa). Switzerland acceded in November 2012.<sup>6</sup>
- Although many have argued that, while the 2001 UN ***Program of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its***

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<sup>4</sup> OAS, Department of International Law, "A-63: Inter-American Convention Against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials", Washington, D.C., <http://www.oas.org/iuridico/english/sigs/a-63.html>.

<sup>5</sup> UN Programme of Action, Implementation Support System: PoA-ISS, "Background : Firearms Protocol", <http://www.poa-iss.org/FirearmsProtocol/FirearmsProtocol.asp>.

<sup>6</sup> UN, Treaty Collection, "Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms", [http://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg\\_no=XVIII-12-c&chapter=18&lang=en](http://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=XVIII-12-c&chapter=18&lang=en).

**Aspects (PoA)** does not explicitly define standards for civilian controls, the standards under the PoA are implicit. To meet their obligations under the PoA, states must adopt national legislation to implement the provisions in the PoA and to enable them to combat the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons on a national level, which requires appropriate regulation over the sale, possession and use of civilian weapons. The political agreement requires measures to ensure accurate records are kept for as long as possible on the manufacture, holding and transfer of small arms and light weapons.<sup>7</sup>

- The 2005 **UN International Tracing Instrument (ITI)**<sup>8</sup> was adopted to enable states to identify and trace illicit small arms and light weapons in a timely and reliable manner. This instrument commits all UN member states to specific marking and record-keeping standards, and establishes common rules for tracing cooperation. The ITI is a political agreement, based on a voluntary multilateral mechanism.
- The 2013 **Arms Trade Treaty (ATT)** aims to regulate the international trade in conventional arms, from small arms to battle tanks, combat aircraft and warships. The treaty is designed to foster peace and security by thwarting uncontrolled destabilizing arms flows to conflict regions. It provides that countries put measures into place to prevent human rights abusers and violators of the law from being supplied with arms in order to avoid the deadly weapons from falling into the hands of warlords, pirates, and gangs. One hundred eighteen countries have signed the treaty including Brazil, New Zealand, Switzerland and South Africa. Australia, France, Germany, Mexico and United Kingdom (England and Wales) have already ratified the treaty.<sup>9</sup>
- The **Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development**, adopted on June 7<sup>th</sup> 2006 aims at addressing the interrelations between armed violence and development and strives to achieve measurable reductions in the global burden of armed violence and improvements in human security by 2015. Of the countries studied in this report, only Israel is not one 112 countries that signed the diplomatic initiative.<sup>10</sup>

Freedom from fear is a fundamental human right, and some have argued that states which do not adequately regulate firearms are failing to meet their obligations.

- The report of the **UN Disarmament Commission, reviewed at the UN General Assembly** in December 1999 stated: *“States should work towards the introduction of appropriate national legislation, administrative regulations and licencing requirements that define the conditions under which firearms can be acquired, used and traded by private persons. In particular they should consider the prohibition of*

<sup>7</sup> Regehr, E. 2001. The UN and a small arms program of action: Measuring success. Ploughshares Monitor, December, <http://www.ploughshares.ca/content/un-and-small-arms-program-action-measuring-success-0>

<sup>8</sup> *International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons*. Decision no. 60/519 of 8 December. A/60/463, §. 95; A/60/PV.61, p. 41, [http://www.poa-iss.org/InternationalTracing/ITI\\_English.pdf](http://www.poa-iss.org/InternationalTracing/ITI_English.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> UNODA.2013. 'Towards Entry Into Force'. *Arms Trade Treaty*. New York NY: United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, 2 April. *United Nations for Disarmament Affairs. Website*, [Online], 2014. <http://www.un.org/disarmament/ATT/>.

<sup>10</sup> Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development. <http://www.genevadeclaration.org/>.

*the unrestricted trade and private ownership of small arms specifically designed for military purposes, such as automatic guns (e.g., assault rifles and machine guns)*".<sup>11</sup>

- The **UN Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice** recognized that strong controls on firearms were needed to protect women from violence, and a 1997 resolution outlined the key elements of effective legislation, including licencing, registration, and safe storage.
- The **UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Resolution 1997/28 Firearm regulation for purposes of crime prevention and public health and safety** underlined the importance of state responsibility in regulating civilian gun ownership, and it strongly encouraged states to enforce national gun control legislation in order to prevent crime and promote public health and safety.
- The **UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and Small Arms**<sup>12</sup> affirmed that there is no international right to own guns and, along with the **UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women**<sup>13</sup> which has raised controls on firearms in the context of Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), added that countries which fail to implement appropriate firearms laws to protect their citizens may be failing to meet their obligations under international human rights law. The report further states *"there is also growing pressure to hold States accountable for patterns of abuse, such as the State's failure to establish reasonable regulation regarding the private ownership of small arms that are likely to be used in homicides, suicides and accidents; its failure to protect individuals from a pattern of domestic violence; and its failure to protect individuals from organized crimes including kidnapping and killing for ransom."*<sup>14</sup>

The present report aims to look at the differences in legislations among selected industrialized countries and territories — Australia, Brazil, Canada, Israel, Mexico, New Zealand, Republic of South Africa, Switzerland, as well as the European Union (which has general common requirements on its territory) and France, Germany and England and Wales (which have more specific legislation) — to compare the civilian acquisition of firearms commonly used for hunting (long guns<sup>15</sup>). While most countries regulate rifles and shotguns similarly, England and Wales have more restrictive rules for shotguns.

## 2. Licencing Requirements

The countries studied all have legislation in place regulating the purchase of rifles and shotguns, and all require that the purchaser be licenced to acquire, possess or transfer firearms. There are

<sup>11</sup> United Nations. General Assembly. A/54/565.1999. (§36).

<sup>12</sup> Barbara Frey, *The Question of the Trade, Carrying and Use of Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Context of Human Rights and Humanitarian Norms*, Working Paper submitted in accordance with Sub-Commission decisions 2001/120, 2002.

<sup>13</sup> Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences (U.N. Doc. E/CN.4/1996/53, §32-33).

<sup>14</sup> Special Rapporteur on human rights and small arms (U.N. Doc. E/CN.4/Sub.2/2002/39; 5/ 2002).

<sup>15</sup> Rifles and shotguns

distinctions in the requirements to obtain such a permit and on licencing administration (national or local).

Australia, Switzerland and, to some extent, the European Union (EU) have distinct regulations in each State, territory or canton. Each central government provides framework legislation that is administered by the local (or state) authorities. In the case of the EU, countries have the opportunity to strengthen their controls beyond what the framework calls for (United Kingdom<sup>16</sup>, France, and Germany have all done so).

The licences provided depend upon acquisition and possession of one or several firearms; upon the type of weapon and/or its purpose for possession and use (Australia, Mexico, New Zealand, United Kingdom, EU); upon public carrying (Germany); upon the weapon's level of danger (France); or upon the "effective need" to acquire a weapon (Brazil, Germany, Israel). Canada is the only country studied for this report where applicants for a gun licence are not required to justify their possession of a rifle or shotgun.

New Zealand, Canada and the EU allow minors to possess a firearm (from 16 years old in New Zealand and 12 years old in Canada). Other countries' licencing systems require applicants to be at least 18 years old - though in Brazil a person must be at least 25 years of age to own a firearm. Israel differentiates a minimum age requirement for citizens with no military service ties (27 years old) to citizens who served in national service (21 years old), and to permanent residents who are not citizens (45 years old). Canadians aged 12 to 17 years old may obtain a Minor's licence after successfully passing the Canadian Firearm Safety Course. This licence allows them to borrow a firearm, not to purchase one. As of December 30, 2012 there were 8232 Minor's licences issued in Canada.

In some countries, licence applicants must pass a mandatory safety training course (Canada, Israel). In South Africa, an applicant must attend an accredited institution to complete the prescribed test on knowledge of the Firearms Control Act (2000) as well as prescribed training and practical tests regarding the safe and efficient handling of a firearm.

The process to obtain a licence in all of the countries studied included background checks such as police records (Switzerland, France, Mexico, South Africa, Israel, Brazil, Canada, New Zealand and England and Wales) or liability insurance (France). Some countries include checks on known risk factors for violence or suicide, e.g., if the applicant is likely or not to be a danger for himself, public order or safety (EU, Switzerland), if the applicant is "trustworthy" (Germany), if the applicant is "fit and proper" (Australia, South Africa, New Zealand), if the applicant "has an honest living" (Mexico, Brazil), or if the applicant "has been irresponsible with alcohol" (New Zealand).

In Canada, the form to obtain a licence includes questions such as "*During the past five (5) years, have you threatened or attempted suicide, or have you suffered from or been diagnosed or treated by a medical practitioner for: depression; alcohol, drug or substance abuse; behavioural problems; or emotional problems?*" and "*During the past two (2) years, have you experienced a divorce, a separation, a breakdown or a significant relationship, job loss or bankruptcy?*" It is

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<sup>16</sup> More specifically England and Wales.

specified on the form that *“a yes answer does not mean your application will be refused but it may lead to further examination.”*<sup>17</sup>

The Canadian process also requires two references to confirm the information entered as answered to the screening questions and spousal notification which requires applicants to provide contact information for current or previous (past two years) spouses or common-law partners, as well as their signature. The purpose of this provision is to ensure that current and former spouses are aware of an individual’s intent to own a firearm. Spousal consent is not required for granting a licence; however, if a spouse has concerns, it will trigger a secondary review of the application. Most countries require references to validate the authenticity of the information on the application for a licence. In New Zealand, two references must be provided including one from a near relative.

Several countries will not grant a licence to individuals with a history of domestic violence (England and Wales, Switzerland, South Africa) or allow for a licence to be revoked when prohibition orders are issued because of domestic violence (New Zealand, Canada). In some countries, an individual has to be criminally investigated or criminally convicted in order for the individual’s licence to be revoked on the grounds of domestic violence (e.g., Brazil). The EU directive states that those granted a permit must not be a danger to themselves, to the public order or to the public safety. South Africa’s Firearms Control Act (2000) has a similar policy that specifies the applicant must not have committed a crime in or outside the country in order to be granted a licence.

In some cases, health professionals are required to certify an applicant’s mental health. In Israel, applicants must provide *“a submission of health and training”*. In four of the Australian States and Territories (New South Wales, Victoria, Northern Territories and Tasmania) the legislation specifically lists any previous attempt by the applicant to commit suicide or cause a self-inflicted injury as a consideration for refusal of an application of a licence.

The term of firearms possession licences vary – e.g., they may have life terms (Germany) or be renewable every two years (Mexico), three years (Israel, Brazil), five years (European Firearms Pass, France, England and Wales, Switzerland, Australia<sup>18</sup> and South Africa) or ten years (New Zealand). For countries where licences are renewable, renewals provide an opportunity for owners to update their information, including their address. While gun licences are renewable every five years in Canada, an amnesty was introduced in 2006<sup>19</sup> (and renewed annually since) to prevent charges against individuals who have failed to renew their licence.

In Australia, licence requirements are based on the type of weapon, the purpose for possession, and the use of the weapon. This means that each licence is issued with certain conditions that are attached to the possession and use of the registered firearm. In South Africa, licences are categorized based on the intended use of the firearm (e.g., self defense, occasional hunting, occasional sports-shooting, private collection, etc.). These categories determine the period of validity of the licence, e.g. a licence to possess firearms for self-defence is five years, whereas a licence to possess firearms for occasional hunting and sport is ten years.

<sup>17</sup> RCMP Form 5592 / CAFC 921 (<http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/cfp-pcaf/form-formulaire/pdfs/5592-eng.pdf>).

<sup>18</sup> With the exception of Western Australia where a licence must be renewed annually and Queensland which is every 10 years.

<sup>19</sup> Government of Canada. Order Declaring an Amnesty Period (2006). SOR/2006-95.

In England and Wales, a gun owner's certificate also specifies the nature and number of firearms the applicant is entitled to purchase or possess, including, if known, their identification numbers. A change of address or firearm loss or destruction requires the certificate to be reissued.

Most countries have mechanisms in place allowing for licences to be revoked. For example in Germany, licences granted under the Weapons Act can be revoked if circumstances later arise which would have resulted in the licence application being refused (e.g., criminal convictions, domestic violence or suicide attempts/risks) or if material restrictions which have been made in connection with granting the licence are not observed.

Some of the issues that have been identified with licencing systems include:

- Licencing is typically based on owners complying with conditions. E.g., in England and Wales, the system relies on certificate holders notifying the police of new acquisitions, sales/transfers and changes in their address. Failure of a certificate holder to comply with his or her obligations will not come to the police's immediate attention. The investigation into the 2008 suicide of a man with a legally held shotgun highlighted some of the challenges. While the individual had been involved in incidents such as criminal damage, domestic violence and a suicide attempt, police did not undertake a review of his suitability to possess firearms because he had changed his address twice without notifying the police. There is a challenge in continuously verifying risk factors of violence and suicide when licences are renewed at longer intervals, or when the procedure to renew the licence is streamlined from the original application. A person's situation changes over time, and not all risk factors can be found in police databases.
- While every country studied allows a licence to be revoked for public safety reasons, there is little information publicly available on ways the general public can raise specific concerns about a gun owner with the authorities. Canada has a toll free line to raise such concerns, but in recent years there has been little publicity about its availability.

### 3. Firearm ownership

Most countries studied have mechanisms in place to link the owner to their firearm. With the exception of Canada and New Zealand, countries have a certain type of registry in place containing information on who owns which rifles and shotguns. The database is either under the supervision of the Ministry of Public Security (Israel, Brazil), the Secretariat of the Interior and Ministry of Defense (Mexico, France), the State or Territory Police (Australia, Switzerland, England and Wales), a Federal Office of Administration (Germany) or a National Commissioner (South Africa).

Most of the firearm registries studied are computerized and established at a national level. Although local authorities sometimes administer firearm registries, the database is accessible at



a national level to grant access to specific police authorities nationally or internationally to share information (Schengen area including Switzerland and some Member States of the EU).

Some countries have multi-level systems, e.g., in Switzerland, licences are issued by the Swiss cantons while the federal registry is national. In Australia, each State and Territory has its own registry. In Canada, information on all gun owners' licences is in a national registry that also includes information on all registered restricted (e.g., most handguns) and prohibited weapons (e.g., automatics and semi-automatics that can be converted to fully automatic). Between 1998 and 2012, the registry also included rifles and shotguns but legislation passed in April 2012<sup>20</sup> repealed the registration of these firearms and mandated the deletion of their data.<sup>21</sup> Before that date, more than 7 million rifles and shotguns were registered in the database. The registry data had previously been used extensively as an investigative tool by police and to support the prosecution of gun-related crime, with an average of 3,600 affidavits per year drawn on registry data. In the absence of the federal registry, the province of Quebec has notified its intention to set up a provincial registry that would include data on rifles and shotguns.

Today, only data on restricted and prohibited firearms are registered and accessible in real-time by police in a computerized firearm registry, along with information on licenced gun owners. In July 2012, regulations<sup>22</sup> forbidding provinces from requiring gun dealers to maintain sales records on non-restricted firearms were passed, undoing a measure that had been in place since 1977. There is now no requirement for importers, distributors or dealers in Canada to maintain records on the non-restricted guns in their possession. In 2011, 33 percent of all guns reported stolen in Canada were non-restricted guns stolen from businesses. These sales records are crucial to allowing police to trace the origins of guns used in crime and to efficiently inspect gun dealers to ensure they follow the law and are responsible for their own inventory.

In 1984, New Zealand repealed a registry for rifles and shotguns that was in place since 1920 and was not computerized or centralized. Currently, only handguns, military style semiautomatics, and restricted weapons are registered.

In May 2008, the EU adopted the Directive 2008/51/EC, which is an amendment to the Directive 91/477/EEC, restricting the circulation of civilian firearms in Europe. The amending Directive defined specific rules on the acquisition and possession of firearms and on the transfer of firearms. Those added regulations require that the legislation of member states meet the expectations mentioned in the UN Firearms Protocol such as the marking and registration of all firearms. It also specifies that each Member State ensure the establishment and maintenance of a computerized (centralized or decentralized) data filing system by December 2014 which will guarantee access to authorized authorities and link each firearm to their legal owner. The records must be maintained for no less than 20 years and include the firearm's type, make,

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<sup>20</sup> Parliament of Canada. Publishing and Depository Services  
Public Works and Government Services Canada. Bill C-19: An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the Firearms Act, [Online], 2012, [<http://www.parl.gc.ca/HousePublications/Publication.aspx?Language=E&Mode=1&DocId=5506066>].

<sup>21</sup> At the time this report was produced, 5.6 million data was deleted. The remaining is data for the province of Quebec pending a legal battle undertaken by the province to obtain the data and set up a provincial registry.

<sup>22</sup> Government of Canada. Firearms Information Regulations (Non-restricted Firearms) (SOR/2012-138)[Online], 2012, [<http://www.laws.justice.gc.ca/eng/Regulations/SOR-2012-138/index.html>].

model, calibre and serial number, as well as the names and addresses of the supplier and the owner.

Germany has enacted measures to comply with the requirements outlined in the Directive. It created the National Weapons Register in July 2012 and, since January 2013, firearms are formally linked to their owner within this new national registry. The law requires owners to register new acquisitions, as well as firearms they already own. There are 5.4 million legally owned firearms in the German registry.

The use of a registry database varies among countries. The data contained in such registries is admissible as court evidences in Australia, Germany, France, and South Africa. In England and Wales, an officer's witness statement describing the results of a search he/she conducted on the registry can be presented in court as evidence of a state of fact. However, special consent is needed in order to use registry information as evidence in Brazil, and there was no information related to the use of registry databases for Israel and Mexico.

Countries report that the registration of firearms helps the police to find the rightful owner when a crime is committed with a gun. The owner's responsibility is therefore increased, and it encourages them to store their weapons carefully, as well as to not give or sell them to people who do not have a licence. Those who are irresponsible are more likely to be identified and held accountable.

Countries with registries all grant access to police officers. Some countries grant broader access. For example in France where customs services and the national service of judicial custom agents also have access to the database.

## 4. Transfer/Sale Requirements

There are different ways a weapon can be sold or transferred. Either the country's legislation authorizes sales between non-authorized dealers or private owners (Switzerland, Germany, France, Canada), or it only allows licenced or authorized dealers (or through a witnessed transfer) to sell firearms (Israel and New Zealand).

Of the countries studied, only Canada includes a minimum wait of 28 days between the time an individual is granted a licence and the time he or she is able to purchase a firearm for the first time.

While every country studied in this report does licence gun owners, there are wide variations in the requirements for a legal transfer to happen:

- In Brazil, the process for transferring a firearm can only be completed once the firearm has been registered to its owner, whose licence is checked at the same time.

- In Switzerland, while there is a requirement to obtain a weapon acquisition certificate when buying a firearm from a dealer, the certificate is not required for transfers between individuals. Both the buyer and the seller must keep a copy of the written contract that materializes the purchase for 10 years.
- Before acquiring a firearm in Australia, a licenced owner must apply to the Police Commissioner for a permit for each firearm. In determining whether to issue a permit, the Commissioner will consider similar factors to those considered when issuing a licence, and must be satisfied that the applicant has “good reason” for acquiring it.
- The EU Directive specifies that firearms may be sold only to authorized persons and that Member States must ensure that all firearms be linked to their owners at any moment. An owner’s licence must be verified as valid but the Directive does not provide specific details on how or by whom.

While in the past a purchaser’s licence in Canada would be checked for validity whenever firearms were acquired, legislative changes introduced in 2012 specify that a seller must only have “no reason to believe” a buyer is not properly licenced. There is no obligation for the seller to see the licence or to verify that it is valid and not revoked, expired, or fraudulent. Public safety experts have raised concerns that this significantly increases the risks that dangerous individuals can buy guns undetected and that it facilitates trafficking by making it extremely difficult to prosecute those who sell to unlicensed individuals. If sellers do verify the licence status, the law specifies that the national police in charge of administering the firearms program is forbidden from keeping any records of the call. This includes if the potential buyer is one of the 17,000 Canadians who has had their licence status revoked in the past 5 years (commonly as a condition of bail or probation or because of high risk of violence) or is using a fraudulent licence.

The Canadian situation is similar to what is found in New Zealand where it is up to the seller to decide if the buyer is a “fit and proper person” to buy the firearm. There is no statutory provision that expressly requires a dealer to check a purchaser’s firearms licence for validity, but however, in New Zealand, it is an offence to sell or supply a firearm to an unlicensed party.

Every country studied has penalties in place for the unauthorised sale of firearms and most have penalties for selling firearms to unlicensed owners (e.g., up to 5 years imprisonment and/or a fine for rifles and shotguns in England and Wales). However, there are difficulties in prosecuting unauthorised transfers or sales, particularly in areas where firearms are not tied to their legal owners, where tracing data is not maintained, or when there are different jurisdictions responsible for monitoring all firearms.

## 5. Conclusion

This report has reviewed national controls over the possessions and acquisition of rifles and shotguns by the civilian population in 11 countries and territories – Australia, Brazil, Canada,

England and Wales, the EU, France, Germany, Israel, Mexico, New Zealand, South Africa, Switzerland, with the intent to identify some of the differences and similarities among them.

Following the international trend where instruments and standards have been implemented regionally and internationally in recent years to provide stronger frameworks to prevent and curb illicit trafficking, most of the countries studied are working at strengthening their legislation, regulations and procedures. Canada stands alone in weakening its controls on rifles and shotguns. The legislative changes introduced in Canada in 2012 were preceded by warnings from public safety officials that they would considerably weaken public safety, as well as internal warnings from government officials that they would put the country in breach of its commitments under several international agreements to stop illicit gun trafficking.

Laws are only words on paper. Laws must be effectively implemented to maximize their impact, and paired with integrated community-based strategies and efforts to raise awareness of the impact of firearm violence and the risks associated with firearms.

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