

## GANGS AND GUNS

While gun violence is down in Canada, certain forms of gun violence have increased. Fighting gang violence requires an integrated approach - strong responses from law enforcement, measures to reduce the supply of guns, and efforts to strike at the root causes of violence.

### Gun violence: Just the facts

- Gun violence in Canada's large cities such as Toronto is a serious concern. The rate of gun homicide fluctuates. Increases in gang related violence have been accompanied by lower "clearance" rates, meaning many such crimes remain unsolved.
- Most of the guns used in gang related violence are handguns. These include guns smuggled in from the United States,<sup>1</sup> as well as guns diverted from legal owners through illegal sales or thefts. Seizures from gangs also often include rifles and shotguns. For example the 2006 seizures from the Malvern gang included rifles and shotguns as well as handguns and assault weapons.<sup>2</sup>
- Gang related gun crime is only one of many issues associated with the misuse of firearms. Legal guns are also used in crime. The killer at Dawson College in Montreal was a "law abiding" gun owner, until he shot 20 people, killing Anastasia DeSousa. Legal guns are often used in domestic violence situations as well. Keeping guns out of the hands of dangerous and unbalanced people should also be a priority.<sup>3</sup>
- Overall Canada is much safer than it was in 1991 when gun control measures on rifles and shotguns were introduced by the Conservatives. There has been a significant decline in most forms of gun violence.
- Gun violence, like cancer, takes many forms, and as such, requires integrated solutions. We need to:
  - 1) **Address the root causes of violence.** Gang members are not born, but bred. Early intervention efforts should include supports for children and families at risk, programs to help kids succeed in school, recreational opportunities, drug rehabilitation programs, training and work opportunities; and countering the culture of violence.
  - 2) **Choke off the supply of guns:** Strong controls are needed to reduce the chance that dangerous people will have access to guns, and to ensure that legal gun owners are accountable for their guns. Theft is a major source of illegal guns in Toronto, as well as guns smuggled into Canada from the US.
  - 3) **Support effective police and justice responses:** Such measures would include building trust and cooperation with police through community based policing, supporting targeted enforcement, such as the gangs and guns task force, ensuring appropriate responses in the courts to illegal guns and violent crime, as well as making sure resources are in place to support enforcement of existing laws.

### Gun Violence in Toronto

- Levels of gun violence in Toronto have fluctuated dramatically over the last 18 years. There has not been a steady increase. (see Table 1: Homicide and Firearm Homicide in Toronto)

- In 2008, Toronto had 50 gun murders. Toronto has a lower homicide rate than many other Canadian cities, and is much safer than American cities of comparable size.<sup>4</sup>
- The 2008 overall homicide rate in Toronto (1.86 per 100,000) was lower than in Edmonton, Winnipeg, Vancouver, Windsor, Regina, Kelowna, and Abbotsford-Mission.
- There have been lower crime clearance rates (solved crimes) in recent years than in the past. Often witnesses are afraid or unwilling to cooperate with the police.
- Although we know that the vast majority of murders in the city are committed with handguns, the "crime guns" seized by Toronto Police's Gangs and Guns unit, include more rifles and shotguns than handguns. The data also highlights the problem with replicas, air guns, etc.<sup>5</sup>
- Most firearms used in crime are not recovered. About 63% of the traceable handguns recovered in Toronto originated in the US. A large proportion of the firearms recovered in crimes have had their serial numbers removed.<sup>6</sup>
- A significant percentage of homicides in Canada are gang related. In Canada in 2008, 138 or 1 in 4 homicides were gang-related homicides, compared to 16% in 2005.<sup>7</sup>

**Table 1: Firearm Homicides in Toronto**

|      | Total Homicides  |                  | Gun Homicides <sup>8</sup> |                  | % homicides with firearms |
|------|------------------|------------------|----------------------------|------------------|---------------------------|
|      | Number           | Rate per 100,000 | Number                     | Rate per 100,000 |                           |
| 2009 | 63 <sup>9</sup>  | 2.2              | 39                         | 1.36             | 61%                       |
| 2008 | 70 <sup>10</sup> | 2.5              | 36                         | 1.28             | 51%                       |
| 2007 | 84 <sup>11</sup> | 3.1              | 42                         | 1.55             | 50%                       |
| 2006 | 70               | 2.6              | 28                         | 1.04             | 40%                       |
| 2005 | 80               | 3.0              | 52                         | 2.0              | 65%                       |
| 2004 | 64               | 2.4              | 27                         | 1.1              | 42%                       |
| 2003 | 67               | 2.5              | 31                         | 1.1              | 48%                       |
| 2002 | 65               | 2.5              | 28                         | 1.1              | 43%                       |
| 2001 | 60               | 2.3              | 33                         | 1.3              | 57%                       |
| 2000 | 60               | 2.4              | 25                         | 1                | 42%                       |
| 1999 | 49               | 1.9              | 18                         | 0.7              | 37%                       |
| 1998 | 56               | 2.2              | 13                         | 0.5              | 23%                       |
| 1997 | 61               | 2.5              | 24                         | 1                | 40%                       |
| 1996 | 58               | 2.5              | 22                         | 0.9              | 36%                       |
| 1995 | 61               | 2.6              | 13                         | 0.6              | 23%                       |
| 1994 | 65               | 2.8              | 25                         | 1.1              | 39%                       |
| 1993 | 59               | 2.6              | 25                         | 1.1              | 42%                       |
| 1992 | 65               | 2.9              | 15                         | 0.7              | 24%                       |
| 1991 | 89               | 3.9              | 38                         | 1.7              | 44%                       |

**Table 2: Homicide rate in major cities in the US and Canada, 2008<sup>12</sup>**

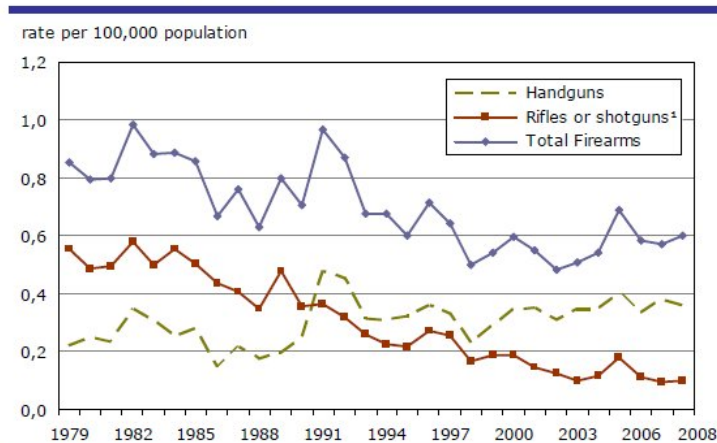
| City        | Homicide Rate per 100,000 |
|-------------|---------------------------|
| New Orleans | 63.6                      |
| St. Louis   | 46.9                      |
| Baltimore   | 36.9                      |
| Detroit     | 33.8                      |
| Washington  | 31.4                      |
| Oakland     | 28.6                      |
| Kansas City | 25.5                      |
| Newark      | 23.9                      |
| Cleveland   | 23.5                      |
| Pittsburgh  | 23.2                      |
| Winnipeg    | 4.07                      |
| Edmonton    | 3.44                      |
| Calgary     | 2.87                      |
| Vancouver   | 2.37                      |
| Toronto     | 1.86                      |
| Montreal    | 1.27                      |

### Gun Violence in Canada

- The number and rate of firearm deaths have decreased over the last 15 years (see Table 4: Firearm Deaths: 1991 – Now)
- National homicide and firearm homicide rates are much lower than 16 years ago (see Table 4: Firearm Homicides in Canada)
- Homicides with rifles and shotguns, as well as domestic homicides with guns, have plummeted.<sup>13</sup>
- Homicides with handguns have remained stable, as many illegal handguns are smuggled and less affected by national laws.
- Rates of domestic homicides involving firearms, suicides with firearms, and robberies with firearms have also declined dramatically over the last decade.

**Table 3: Total Firearm Homicide Rates, Rifle and Shotgun Homicide Rates, and Handgun Homicide Rates in Canada 1974 to 2008 (per 100,000)<sup>14</sup>**

Use of firearms generally increasing since 2002



1. Excludes sawed-off rifles or shotguns.

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

**Table 4: Firearm Deaths 1991 – Now**

| Year                                      | 1991 | 1995 | Latest      | Change |
|---|------|------|-------------|--------|
| <b>Total firearm deaths</b>               |      |      | <b>2005</b> |        |
| Number                                    | 1444 | 1125 | 818         | -44%   |
| Rate per 100,000                          | 5.2  | 3.8  | 2.45        | -53%   |
| <b>Homicide with firearms</b>             |      |      | <b>2008</b> |        |
| Number                                    | 271  | 176  | 200         | -26.2% |
| Rate per 100,000                          | 0.97 | 0.6  | 0.59        | -39%   |
| <b>Homicides with rifles and shotguns</b> |      |      | <b>2008</b> |        |
| Number                                    | 103  | 61   | 34          | -67%   |
| Rate per 100,000                          | 0.37 | 0.21 | 0.1         | -73%   |
| <b>Homicides of women with firearms</b>   |      |      | <b>2004</b> |        |
| Number                                    | 85   | 43   | 32          | -62%   |
| Rate per 100,000                          | 0.6  | 0.29 | 0.2         | -67%   |
| <b>Robberies with firearms</b>            |      |      | <b>2008</b> |        |
| Number                                    | 8995 | 6692 | 4,536       | -50%   |
| Rate per 100,000                          | 32   | 23   | 14          | -57%   |

### Comparison with the USA

Toronto has much lower rates of gun violence than many other cities in North America, and Canada has homicide rates significantly lower than those seen in the US.

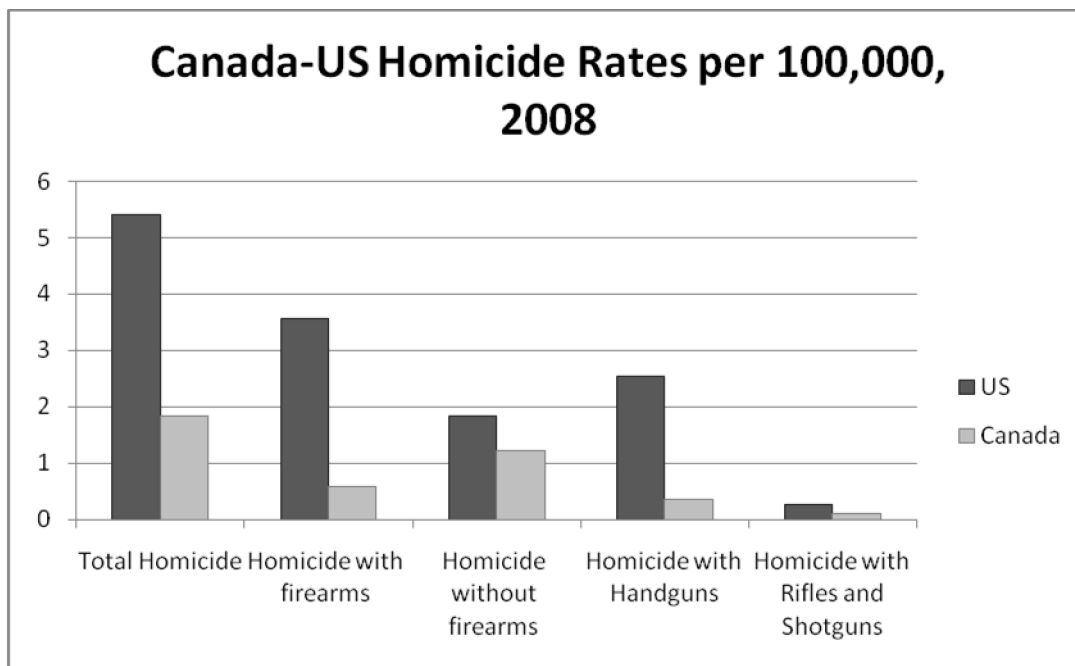
- In 2008 the US had 10,739 gun homicides, compared to 200 in Canada. While Canada and the US have comparable rates of homicides without guns (1.23 in Canada vs. 1.83 per 100 000 in the US), the US homicide rate with guns is 6 times Canada's (3.56 vs. 0.59 per 100 000) and the US handgun homicide rate is 8 times the Canadian rate (2.53 vs. 0.36 per 100 000). (Tables 5: Canada compared to the US: Homicide and Robbery (2008)).
- In 2008, the US also had 4.4 times the rate of robberies committed with firearms (62 vs 14) even though rates of robberies without guns are comparable (83 vs 82.8). (Tables 5: Canada compared to the US: Homicide and Robbery (2008))

**Tables 5: Canada and the USA: Firearm Homicide and Robbery Rates (per 100,000) 2008**

**Canada-US Comparison, Homicide**

| 2008                                 | Canada           | US               | Comparison US vs Canada |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------------|
| Total Homicide                       | 611              | 16,272           |                         |
| Rate of Homicide                     | 1.83 per 100,000 | 5.4 per 100,000  | 3x                      |
| Total Homicide with Firearms         | 200              | 10,739           |                         |
| Rate of Homicide with Firearms       | 0.59 per 100,000 | 3.56 per 100,000 | 6x                      |
| Homicides without Guns               | 411              | 5,532            |                         |
| Rates of Homicides without Guns      | 1.23 per 100,000 | 1.83 per 100,000 | 1.4x                    |
| Total Handgun Homicides              | 121              | 7,647            |                         |
| Rates of Handgun Homicides           | 0.36 per 100,000 | 2.53 per 100,000 | 7x                      |
| Total Rifle and Shotgun Homicides    | 34               | 813              |                         |
| Rates of Rifle and Shotgun Homicides | 0.1 per 100,000  | 0.26 per 100,000 | 2.6x                    |

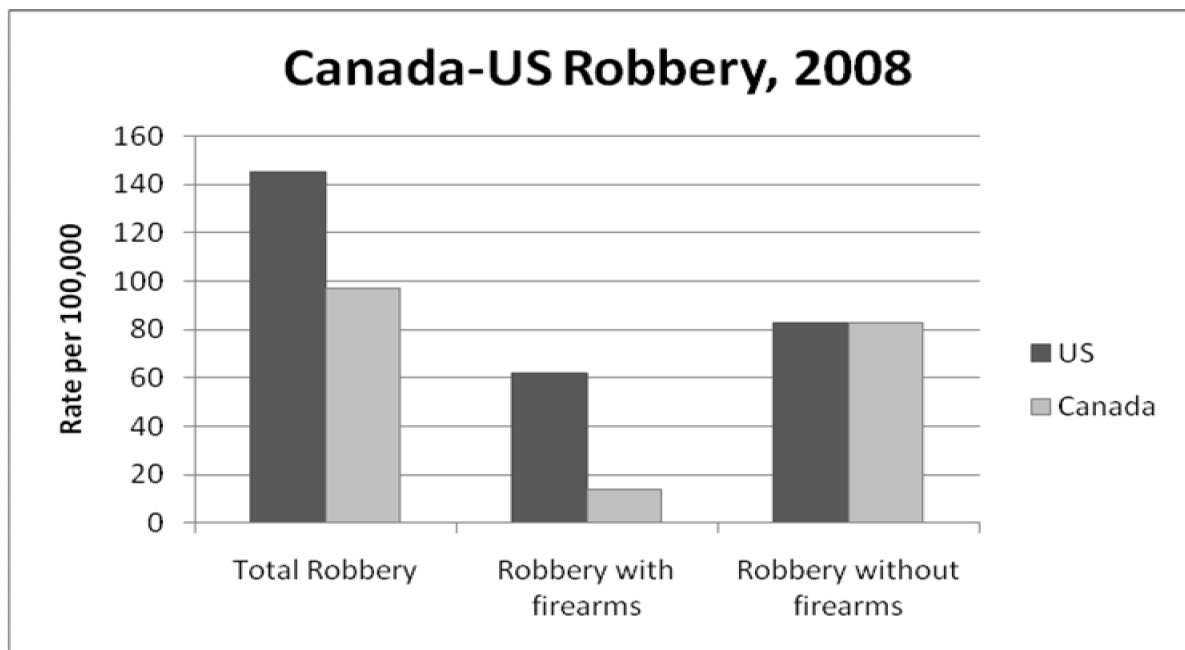
Source: US Department of Justice, "2008 Crime statistics, Expanded Homicide Data," September 2009. Table 20. [http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/cius2008/data/table\\_20.html](http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/cius2008/data/table_20.html). US Department of Justice, "2008 Crime statistics, Expanded Homicide Data," September 2009. Table 1. [http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/cius2008/data/table\\_01.html](http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/cius2008/data/table_01.html). Sarah Beattie. "Homicide in Canada 2008," Statistics Canada. Juristat, vol. 29, no. 4, October 2009.



## Canada-US Comparison, Robbery

| 2008                              | Canada | US      | Comparison US vs Canada |
|-----------------------------------|--------|---------|-------------------------|
| Total Robbery                     | 32,281 | 441,855 |                         |
| Rate of Robbery                   | 97     | 145.3   | 1.4X                    |
| Total Robbery with Firearms       | 4,536  | 189,997 |                         |
| Rate of Robbery with Firearms     | 14     | 62      | 4.4X                    |
| Robbery without Firearms          | 27,745 | 251,857 |                         |
| Rates of Robbery without Firearms | 83     | 82.8    | 0.99X                   |

Source: US Department of Justice, "2008 Crime statistics, Expanded Homicide Data," September 2009. Table 21. [http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/cius2008/data/table\\_21.html](http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/cius2008/data/table_21.html). US Department of Justice, "2008 Crime statistics, Expanded Homicide Data," September 2009. Table 1. [http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/cius2008/data/table\\_01.html](http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/cius2008/data/table_01.html). Marnie Wallace. "Police-reported Crime Statistics in Canada 2008," Statistics Canada. Juristat, vol. 29, no. 3, July 2009.



<sup>1</sup> Weber, Bob. "Smuggled U.S. gun responsible for most Canadian armed crime : report". The Canadian Press. July 29, 2009

<sup>2</sup> Toronto Police Service, "Raid Ends Gang's Reign of Terror," May 28, 2006.

<sup>3</sup> Drummond, Alan. Kapur, Atul K. Ovens, Howard. Snider, Carolyn E. "CAEP Position Statement on Gun Control." January, 2009.

<sup>4</sup> Statistics Canada. "Juristat Article: Homicide in Canada 2008." October 2009. Vol. 29, no.4.

<sup>5</sup> Toronto Police Service. "2007 TPS Statistical Report."

<sup>6</sup> Canada. Feature Focus: The illegal firearms market in Canada 2007. Ottawa (ON): Criminal Intelligence Service Canada; 2008. Available: [www.cisc.gc.ca/annual\\_reports/annual\\_report\\_2007/feature\\_focus\\_2007\\_e.html](http://www.cisc.gc.ca/annual_reports/annual_report_2007/feature_focus_2007_e.html) (accessed 2008 Nov 27).

<sup>7</sup> Statistics Canada. "Homicide in Canada 2008." October 2009. Vol. 29, no 4.

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.thestar.com/static/googlemaps/starmaps.html?xml=homicides.xml>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.cbc.ca/toronto/features/homicide2009/>

<sup>10</sup> Toronto Star, "GTA murders drop in 2008," January 1, 2009.

<sup>11</sup> Toronto Police Service. Statistical Report. 2007. P.4.

<sup>12</sup> [http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/cius2008/data/table\\_08\\_dd.html](http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/cius2008/data/table_08_dd.html) (US city rates for Murder and nonnegligent manslaughter) and

Statistics Canada. "Homicide in Canada 2008." October 2009. Vol. 29, no 4.

<sup>13</sup> Statistics Canada. "Homicide in Canada 2008." October 2009. Vol. 29, no 4.

<sup>14</sup> Statistics Canada. "Homicide in Canada 2008." October 2009. Vol. 29, no 4.