

## FIREARM FACT SHEET

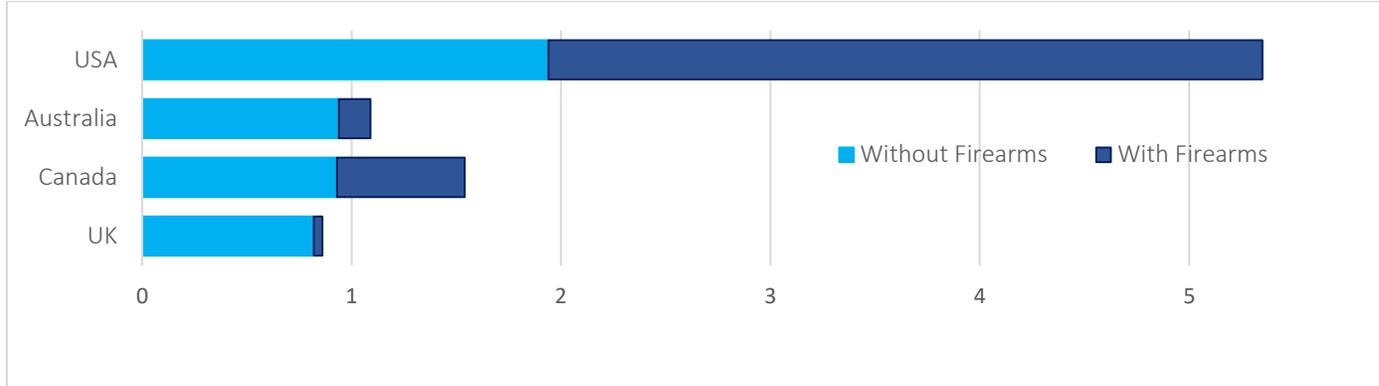
While guns do not cause violence, easy access firearms fuels gang violence, domestic violence, suicide and undermines community safety.<sup>i</sup> Consider the facts:

- Shootings are now the most common means of homicide, surpassing stabbing and beating.<sup>ii</sup> Handguns account for 58% of shooting homicides.<sup>iii</sup> In 2016, for the third consecutive year, there was an increase in both the number (223) and rate (0.61 per 100,000) of firearm-related homicides in Canada, the highest rate since 2005<sup>iv</sup>.
- There are now nearly 1 million legally owned handguns in Canada.<sup>v</sup> Many legal handguns are stolen, illegal sold, and diverted.<sup>vi</sup> More crime guns that are traced come from Canadian sources.<sup>vii</sup>
- Handguns and military assault weapons<sup>viii</sup> are not used for hunting, by farmers or indigenous people for legitimate purposes and US-style arming for “self- protection” is rising.<sup>ix</sup>
- The Supreme Court has said there is no US-style “right” to own guns in Canada<sup>x</sup>
- Canada has the fourth highest rate of gun deaths among OECD countries and is one of few developed countries to have loosened its gun laws in past decades.<sup>xi</sup>
- The majority of Canadians support a stricter controls on licensing and gun sales, a ban on military assault weapons and a ban on handguns<sup>xii xiii</sup>
- Stronger gun regulation will increase safety in both urban and rural Canada.<sup>xiv</sup>
- Military weapons such as the AR-15 used in the Parkland Florida massacre are sold to Canadians as restricted weapons.<sup>xv xvi</sup>
- Legal handguns are misused and diverted to illegal markets. Legally owned guns have been used in the worst mass shootings in Canada including the Montreal massacre, the Vernon massacre, the Quebec Islamic Centre massacre. One of the worst domestic violence shootings in Canadian history (Edmonton) was with a stolen handgun as was the Danforth shooting in Toronto.
- While smuggled guns are undeniably a problem, diversion of legal guns to illegal markets is a piece of the puzzle.
- Firearms also figure prominently in the cycle of violence against women and when firearms are present, women and their children are more likely to die.<sup>xvii</sup>
- Research on mass murderers point to “psychiatric disturbances and odd/reclusive and acting-out personality traits, a fascination with weapons and war.<sup>xviii</sup> Firearms are also a threat in the hands of political extremists regardless of whether their hate is motivated by misogyny, homophobia, anti-Semitism, islamophobia or racism.
- The risk factors for homicide and suicide are similar. Suicide attempts with firearms usually end in death.<sup>xix</sup>

The evidence is clear – in industrialized countries where there are more guns, there are higher rates of firearms crime and gun-related deaths. A comparison of Canada, the UK, Australia and the US is instructive: While rates of homicide WITHOUT guns are comparable (although the US is slightly higher), rates of homicide WITH guns are dramatically different. **The UK, a country which also has issues regarding income disparity, inequality, substance abuse and gangs had 27 gun murders in 2016.** An important difference? It banned handguns after the Dunblane massacre in 1996.

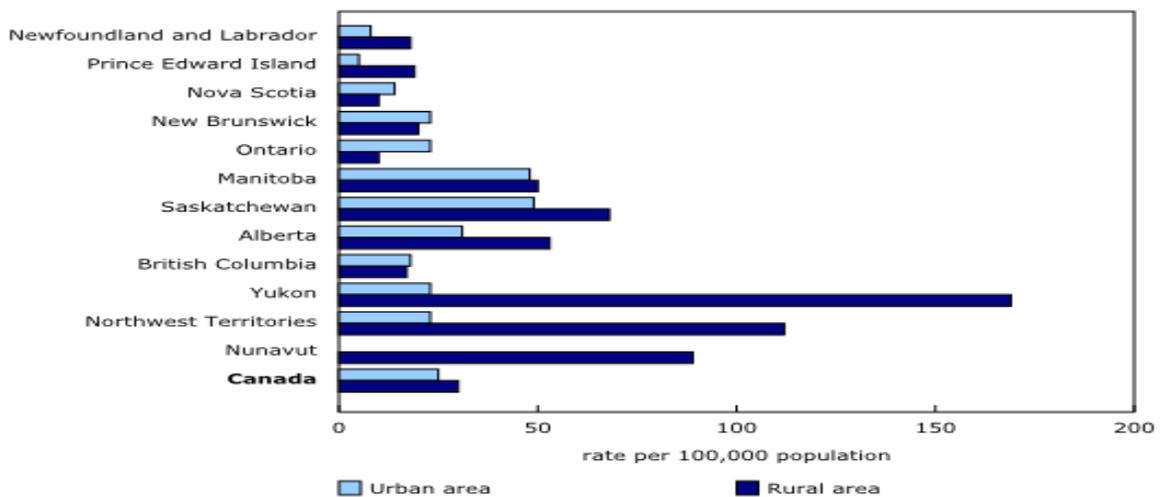
Discussions of banning handguns emerged after the Concordia University Shooting in 1994, during the 2004 election campaign and more recently. **In 2004, there were about 350,000 restricted weapons. Now there are more than 1 million.<sup>xx</sup>**

Table 1: Comparison of homicides without firearms versus with firearms (per 100,000)



Countries such as the UK, Australia and Japan have shown that strict gun control laws lead to dramatically lower gun homicide, crime and death rates.<sup>xxi xxii xxiii</sup> Even in Canada, where there are more guns there are higher rates of crime and death: in spite of the rhetoric about gun control being an urban or gang-related issue, rural rates are actually higher.

Table 2: Victims of police-reported firearm-related violent crime 2016, rate per 100,000 population.<sup>xxiv</sup>



Firearms in the home significantly increase the risk that a woman will be killed in domestic violence. In 2008, PLEIS-NB in collaboration with the Department of Sociology at the University of New Brunswick conducted an extensive examination of family violence in a rural context, focusing on the social and cultural context of firearms in rural homes and the impact on women dealing with abuse. Key among the findings was that one-quarter of women surveyed lived in a household with firearms, 72 percent of which were long guns. Two-thirds of the women with firearms in their home (66

percent) said knowing firearms were present made them more fearful for their safety and well-being, and 70 percent said it affected their decisions whether to tell others about or seek help for abuse they received. Many said their partner deliberately harmed or killed their pet or farm animal or threatened to do so. They concluded that while firearms were accepted as necessary in rural communities, fear of firearms misuse can become a community concern affecting family, neighbours and service providers who are too afraid to call the police when they witness abuse, for fear of retaliation, and that when women do disclose firearms misuse to a service provider, often no follow-up occurs. They found that many women delay seeking help because they were afraid their pets would be killed or abused. <sup>xxv</sup>

Several cases also identified gaps in screening processes in part because of resource restrictions. For example there were limited secondary investigations even when concerns were expressed about firearms owners or flags raised in the licensing process. Additionally while more research is needed, there are cases which have suggested gaps in the application of screening processes

- [2010 Provincial court Judge Marlene Graham recommended better screening of an applicant's legal and mental health backgrounds in a fatality inquiry looking into the shooting death of Corey Lewis, who was killed by Okotoks RCMP officers in 2010. "I find that the screening process used to grant the gun licences to Mr. Lewis lacked diligence and common sense and gives me no assurance that public safety, which is the purpose of the Firearms Act, was being sufficiently emphasized throughout the process."](#) <sup>xxvi</sup>
- **2014 Justin Bourque, a 24-year-old from Moncton, shot five officers from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), killing three and severely injuring two.**
- Nov 6, 2017, Abbotsford, B.C. In BC a police officer was killed by a man whose license had expired. The explanation for why it was not removed? Insufficient resources to enforce the law. Oscar Arfmann, the 65-year-old charged with the first-degree murder of Constable John Davidson, once had a valid firearms licence, but it expired in 2015 - the year his family says his deteriorating mental health sent him to the hospital. Ninety days after any gun licence expires, local police are notified by the RCMP's Canadian Firearms Program, at which point officers are supposed to follow up and see what the person is doing with the weapon... An average of 88,000 Canadians had their gun licences expire in each of the last five years, according to official data. <sup>xxvii</sup>
- January 3, 2017 Big-Tracadie, Nova Scotia - Lionel Desmond, 33, suffering from PTSD killed his wife, Shanna Desmond, 31, their 10-year-old daughter, Aaliyah, and Brenda Desmond, 52, who was Lionel's mother then committed suicide. In spite of his wife's concerns, his psychiatrist thought it was ok for him to have a firearm
- **2017 A gun club member engaged in online hate activities was convicted in the shooting at la grande mosquée de Québec raising questions about screening processes**

- **Gerald Stanley (who shot Colton Boushie) claimed he had handguns “for shooting coyotes” – not a lawful reason for possessing a restricted weapon (they are not legally used for hunting or predator control except in specific circumstances)**
- **Additionally, the dramatic growth in restricted firearms, which more than doubled in 10 years as well as the increase in domestically sourced crime guns, suggests that screening processes were not being rigorously applied particularly for restricted weapons (principally handguns) in spite of the intent of the law.**

### Ban Civilian Possession of Handguns and Military Assault Weapons

In spite of the opposition by the gun lobby, the Government should also take action to ban handguns and assault weapons. This is supported by the cities of Toronto and Montreal. While restricted and prohibited weapons are supposed to be “restricted” and “prohibited” they have been allowed to proliferate, because of loopholes in the legislation and weak implementation. For the first time in 30 years traced crime guns (which have been tracked consistently over that time) show a dramatic increase in domestically sourced firearms.

**With almost 1 million legally owned handguns will soon reach the tipping point. We need your help now to ban civilian possession of handguns and military assault weapons.**

[www.guncontrol.ca](http://www.guncontrol.ca)

<sup>i</sup> Canadian Paediatric Society. (2018). The prevention of firearm injuries in Canadian youth. Retrieved from <https://www.cps.ca/en/documents/position/the-prevention-of-firearm-injuries-in-canadian-youth>

<sup>ii</sup> <https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/cntrng-crm/gn-crm-frrms/index-en.aspx>

<sup>iii</sup> Statistics Canada. (2018). Firearm-related violent crime, 2009 to 2017. Retrieved from <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-28-0001/2018001/article/00004-eng.htm>

<sup>iv</sup> <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/171122/dq171122b-eng.htm>

<sup>v</sup> RCMP. (2016). Commissioner of Firearms report. Retrieved from <http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/en/2016-commissioner-firearms-report>

<sup>vi</sup> CBC. (2018). Illegal guns sourced in Canada surge compared to those smuggled from U.S. Retrieved from <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/guns-domestic-danforth-shooting-toronto-1.4759159>

<sup>vii</sup> CBC. (2018). Illegal guns sourced in Canada surge compared to those smuggled from U.S. Retrieved from <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/guns-domestic-danforth-shooting-toronto-1.4759159>

<sup>viii</sup> W.Cukier. The Feasibility of Increased Restrictions on the Civilian Possession of Military Assault Weapons at the Global Level. Ploughshares. <http://guncontrol.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/wpMAW.pdf>

<sup>ix</sup> Tammy Robert. “No, rural Prairie dwellers, you can’t shoot to protect your property. Gerald Stanley never claimed such a right, but his trial resurrected a dangerous fallacy among residents that could cause future grief”, Macleans. Feb 8, 2018 Retrieved from <https://www.macleans.ca/news/no-rural-prairie-dwellers-you-cant-shoot-to-protect-your-property/>

<sup>x</sup> Judgements of the Supreme Court of Canada. R. v. Hasselwander, [1993] 2 S.C.R. 398. Retrieved from [https://scc-csc.lexum.com/scc-csc/scc-csc/en/item/1007/index.do?site\\_preference=norma](https://scc-csc.lexum.com/scc-csc/scc-csc/en/item/1007/index.do?site_preference=norma)

<sup>xi</sup> Grinshteyn E, Hemenway D. Violent death rates: The US compared with other high-income OECD countries, 2010. Am J Med 2016; 129(3):266–73. Retrieved from [https://www.amjmed.com/article/S0002-9343\(15\)01030-X/pdf](https://www.amjmed.com/article/S0002-9343(15)01030-X/pdf)

<sup>xii</sup> <http://policyoptions.irpp.org/magazines/march-2018/gun-control-still-a-key-issue-for-centre-left-voters/>

<sup>xiii</sup> Ekos Politics. 2017. Here’s a Simple Idea: Most Canadians Want a Strict Ban on Guns in Our Cities. Retrieved from

<http://www.ekospolitics.com/index.php/2017/12/heres-a-simple-idea-most-canadians-want-a-strict-ban-on-guns-in-our-cities/>

<sup>xiv</sup> Statistics Canada. “Victims of police-reported firearm-related violent crime, by province and territory and urban-rural area, 2016. Retrieved from <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/180628/cg-c001-eng.htm>

<sup>xv</sup> Government of Canada. Justice Laws Website, PART III

Firearms and Other Weapons. Retrieved from <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-46/page-18.html#h-37>

<sup>xvi</sup> CBC. (2018). How America’s gun laws compare to Canada’s. Retrieved from <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/sudbury/ar15-canada-vs-us-1.4564601>

<sup>xvii</sup> <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2013001/article/11805/11805-2-eng.htm>

<sup>xviii</sup> J. Reid Meloy Ph.D. A comparative analysis of North American adolescent and adult mass murderers, Behavioral Sciences & the Law, Volume 22, Issue 3 May/June 2004, 291-309

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- <sup>xx</sup> RCMP. Commissioner of Firearms. Annual Reports. Ottawa. 2006 -2016.
- <sup>xxi</sup> Harvard Injury Control Research Center. 2011. Bulletins 'The Australian Gun Buyback', Issue 4. Retrieved from [https://cdn1.sph.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/1264/2012/10/bulletins\\_australia\\_spring\\_2011.pdf](https://cdn1.sph.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/1264/2012/10/bulletins_australia_spring_2011.pdf)
- <sup>xxii</sup> Chapman, S., Alpers, P., Agho, K., and Jones, M. (2006). Australia's 1996 gun law reforms: Faster fall in firearm deaths, firearm suicides and a decade without mass shootings. *Injury Prevention* 12:365-72.
- <sup>xxiii</sup> Alpers, Philip and Marcus Wilson. 2018. Japan — Gun Facts, Figures and the Law. Sydney School of Public Health, The University of Sydney. GunPolicy.org. Retrieved from <https://www.gunpolicy.org/firearms/region/japan>
- <sup>xxiv</sup> Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.
- <sup>xxv</sup> Exploring the Links: Firearms, Family Violence and Animal Abuse in Rural Communities, to the Canada Firearms Centre, Royal Canadian Mounted Police and Public Safety Canada. [http://www.legal-info-legale.nb.ca/en/uploads/file/pdfs/Family\\_Violence\\_Firearms\\_Animal\\_Abuse.pdf](http://www.legal-info-legale.nb.ca/en/uploads/file/pdfs/Family_Violence_Firearms_Animal_Abuse.pdf)
- <sup>xxvi</sup> <https://globalnews.ca/news/2432194/alberta-judge-calls-for-better-gun-licence-screening-in-wake-of-fatal-rcmp-shooting/>
- <sup>xxvii</sup> <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/british-columbia/man-charged-with-killing-bc-police-officer-had-an-expired-gun-licence/article36933782/>