

Firearms and violent crime in Canada, 2012

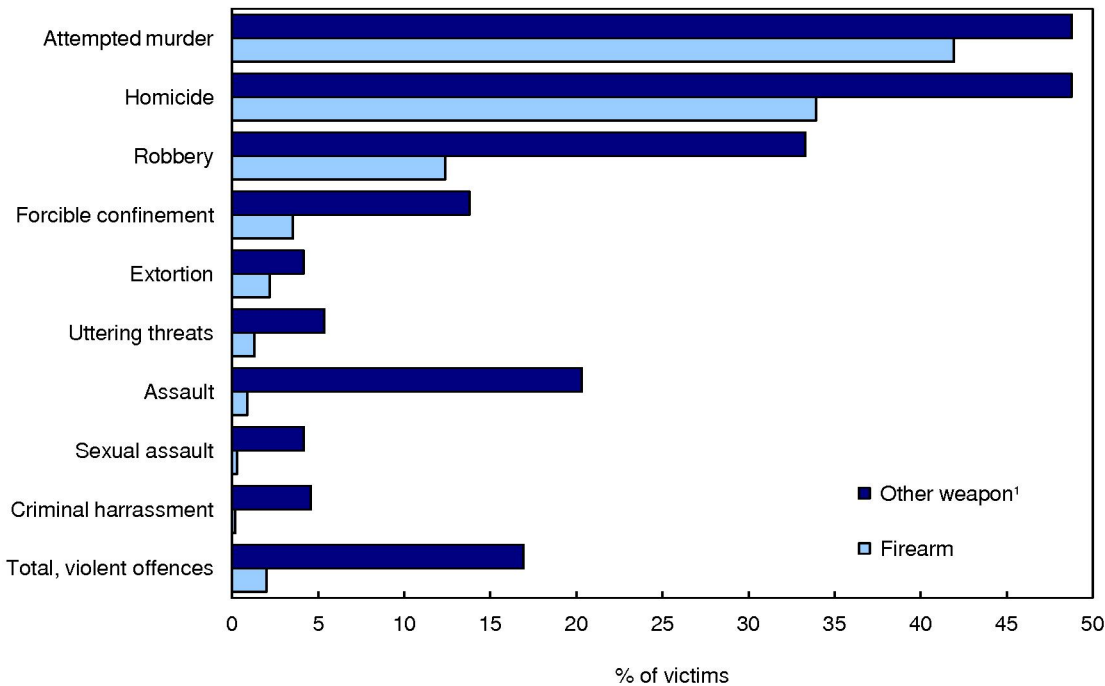
Released at 8:30 a.m. Eastern time in *The Daily*, Wednesday, April 23, 2014

Both the number of victims and the rate of firearm-related violent crime in Canada fell by more than one-quarter between 2009 and 2012 (excluding Quebec because of data quality issues). Police services reported 5,600 victims of firearm-related violent crime in 2012, about 1,800 fewer victims of this type of crime than in 2009.

This represented a rate of 21 victims per 100,000 population in 2012, down from 29 victims per 100,000 population in 2009. Although violent crime is generally decreasing, the rate of firearm-related violent crime has fallen at a faster pace than that of non-firearm-related violent crime.

About 2% of all violent crimes in 2012 were firearm-related, while 17% involved another type of weapon, such as a knife or blunt instrument. In addition, four in five (81%) police-reported violent crimes did not involve any type of weapon. These proportions have been stable since 2009.

Chart 1
Victims of violent crime, selected offences, by most serious weapon present, Canada, 2012



1. Includes all weapons other than firearms, such as knives, clubs or blunt instruments, poison, motor vehicles, ligature or fire.

Note(s): Excludes data for Quebec, where "the most serious weapon present" was reported as unknown in a large proportion of incidents.

In 2012, more than half of firearm-related violent crimes involved handguns (57%), followed by shotguns or rifles (16%) and other types of firearms (4%), such as a fully automatic firearm or a sawed-off rifle or shotgun. The remaining 23% involved a firearm-like weapon (such as a pellet gun or a flare gun) or an unknown type of firearm.

Saskatchewan and Manitoba have the highest provincial rates of firearm-related violent crime

Similar to trends in violent crime in general, Saskatchewan (34 per 100,000 population) and Manitoba (32 per 100,000) recorded the highest rates of firearm-related violence in 2012.

Despite recording the highest provincial rates of firearm-related violent crime, the rate of handgun-related violent crimes in both Saskatchewan and Manitoba was below the national average. The highest rate of handgun-related violence among reporting provinces was in Nova Scotia (16 per 100,000 population), followed by British Columbia (15 per 100,000).

Halifax and Moncton have the highest rates of firearm-related violent crime among CMAs

Halifax (41 per 100,000 population) and Moncton (39 per 100,000 population) had the highest rates of firearm-related violent crime among census metropolitan areas (CMAs). Handguns tended to be more often involved in firearm-related violent crime in CMAs. In turn, non-CMA areas reported firearm-like weapons or unknown types of firearm as most common, followed by rifles or shotguns. More than 8 in 10 (82%) firearm-related violent offences in Toronto involved a handgun, the highest proportion among CMAs.

Increase in homicides committed with a firearm in 2012

Shootings (33% of all homicides) and stabbings (31%) remained the most common methods of committing homicide in 2012, according to national homicide information that includes the province of Quebec. The rate of firearm-related homicide was 0.49 per 100,000 population in 2012, up 8% from the previous year. Despite the increase, Canada's firearm-related homicide rate in 2012 was 61% lower than in 1975, when the rate of firearm homicide was at its peak.

There were 172 firearm-related homicides in Canada in 2012, a rise of 14 over the previous year. In contrast, there were 40 fewer stabbings, 13 fewer beatings, and 16 fewer homicides committed with other methods in Canada in 2012.

Canada's firearm-related homicide rate in 2012 was about seven times lower than that of the United States (3.5 per 100,000 population in 2012) and was similar to rates in Ireland (0.36 per 100,000 population in 2010) and Switzerland (0.52 per 100,000 population in 2010). The Canadian rate was considerably higher than the rates in Japan (0.01 per 100,000 population in 2008) and the United Kingdom (0.06 per 100,000 population in 2011).

In 2012, about half (46%) of all homicides committed with a firearm were gang-related, compared with fewer than 1 in 10 homicides committed with another type of weapon or with physical force.

Persons accused of firearm-related violent crime typically young, strangers

Individuals between the ages of 18 and 24 were accused of firearm-related violent crime at a higher rate (50 per 100,000 population) than any other age group, while youth (age 12 to 17) had the next highest rate of persons accused.

While victims of violent crime often know the accused person, this was not as frequently the case for victims of firearm-related violent crime in 2012. The majority (60%) of victims of firearm-related violent crime were victimized by a stranger, compared with about 4 in 10 (36%) victims of violent crime where another weapon was present and one-quarter (25%) of victims of violent crime where no weapon was present.

Note to readers

This release is based on a Juristat article that presents information on police-reported firearm-related violent crime at the national, provincial/territorial and census metropolitan area levels. Characteristics of victims, accused persons, and incidents are also analyzed and compared with police-reported violent crime that did not involve firearms. Data are drawn from the incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting Survey, the Homicide Survey, and the Integrated Criminal Court Survey.

Data exclude the province of Quebec, where "the most serious weapon present" was reported as unknown in a large proportion of incidents. In addition, trend analysis of data from the incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting Survey is limited to the period from 2009 to 2012, as a result of differences in coverage from previous years. Since 2009, the Uniform Crime Reporting Survey Trend database represents police services covering 99% of the population of Canada.

Table 1
Victims of violent crime, by type of weapon, by province and territory, 2012

	Firearm			Other weapon ¹		No weapon ²		Unknown		Total	
	number	%	rate ³	number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%
Total, provinces and territories	5,575	2.0	20.9	47,589	16.9	228,140	81.1	7,627	...	288,931	100.0
Newfoundland and Labrador	75	1.2	14.6	970	15.1	5,362	83.7	151	...	6,558	100.0
Prince Edward Island	16	1.1	10.9	145	10.2	1,256	88.6	20	...	1,437	100.0
Nova Scotia	268	2.4	28.2	1,573	14.0	9,378	83.6	85	...	11,304	100.0
New Brunswick	180	1.8	23.8	1,169	11.9	8,464	86.3	163	...	9,976	100.0
Quebec	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Ontario	2,228	2.1	16.6	17,257	16.1	87,986	81.9	1,951	...	109,422	100.0
Manitoba	390	1.9	31.6	4,532	21.6	16,053	76.5	981	...	21,956	100.0
Saskatchewan	366	1.8	34.3	4,073	19.9	15,987	78.3	895	...	21,321	100.0
Alberta	929	2.1	23.9	7,549	16.7	36,679	81.2	2,072	...	47,229	100.0
British Columbia	1,048	2.0	22.7	9,425	18.3	40,970	79.6	953	...	52,396	100.0
Yukon	6	0.5	16.6	185	15.7	987	83.8	74	...	1,252	100.0
Northwest Territories	17	0.6	39.2	322	11.1	2,575	88.4	160	...	3,074	100.0
Nunavut	52	1.8	154.3	389	13.5	2,443	84.7	122	...	3,006	100.0

... not applicable

1. Includes all weapons other than firearms, such as knives, clubs or blunt instruments, poison, motor vehicles, ligature or fire.

2. Includes physical force and threats.

3. Rates are calculated per 100,000 population using revised July 1, 2012, population estimates.

Note(s): Excludes data for Quebec, where "the most serious weapon present" was reported as unknown in a large proportion of incidents. Percentage calculations exclude cases where the weapon is unknown.

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey numbers 3302, 3312 and 3315.

The Juristat article "Firearms and violent crime in Canada, 2012" (85-002-X) is now available. From the Browse by key resource module of our website under Publications, choose All subjects, then Crime and justice, and Juristat.

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