

Experts from a variety of disciplines - public health, suicide prevention, criminology, domestic violence, emergency medicine - provided research that was critical to the formulation of policy. The focus was shifted from experts with knowledge of firearms to experts in crime and injury prevention. Their studies and testimony revealed that firearms figured prominently in many problems:

- Firearms are used in approximately 7000 robberies per year.¹
- More than 3000 firearms are reported lost or stolen every year, by definition falling into the hands of criminals.²
- Unsafe storage of firearms is a factor in many crimes and injuries involving youth because impulsiveness is often a factor.³
- From a public health perspective, firearms death and injury - whether intentional or unintentional - are a serious threat to the health of Canadians. Although the absolute numbers are not large, the fact that many of the deaths are preventable makes them a major cause for concern.⁴
- The cost among young people is particularly high: firearms deaths are the third leading cause of death among young people 15-24.⁵
- Canada is fifth among industrialized countries in the death rate among children under the age of 14. Many of these are a result of firearms being unsafely stored.⁶
- Firearms account for 1/3 of successful suicides and they significantly increase the lethality of attempts. When access to firearms is reduced, other means are not always substituted.⁷
- Most firearm owners are men but many of the victims of firearm assaults are women. Legally owned rifles and shotguns are the weapons of choice when men kill their wives and they figure prominently in the cycle of violence. On average women are assaulted more than 30 times before they follow through with charges but information often exists which suggests that there is a problem. The presence of firearms in situations of domestic violence increases the risk to the parties involved as well as to the police.⁸ Concern about the role of firearms in domestic violence has been expressed by NGOs in a number of countries.
- Rifles and shotguns are most commonly used to kill and most of them were at one time legally owned.⁹

Effectiveness of Firearms Regulations

A number of researchers have maintained that there is sufficient evidence to conclude that rates of firearms death and injury are linked to the accessibility of firearms. Access to firearms may be defined in a number of ways including: the percentage of households where firearms are present (or various surrogate measures) or the ease with which individuals can obtain firearms and ammunition in a given place at a given time.

The accessibility thesis has also been supported by studies examining the effects of legislation on death and injury rates in Canada.¹⁰ A more recent study suggests that changes to Canada's gun control law have had an effect on accidental firearm death