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Homicide in Canada, 2016

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Firearm homicides increased for third year in a row

- For the third year in a row, firearm-related homicides increased in number and rate. In 2016, there were 223 firearm-related homicides, 44 more than the previous year. This represents a rate of 0.61 per 100,000 population, a 23% increase from the rate in 2015 and the highest rate since 2005. The higher number and rate of firearm-related homicides is due to increases in all firearm types, with the exception of sawed-off rifles or shotguns (Table 5).
- Handguns continue to be the most frequently used type of firearm, representing 58% of all firearm-related homicides in 2016 (an increase of 1% from the previous year). The rate for this type of firearm (0.36 per 100,000 population) is at its highest point since 2008 and increased by 26% from the previous year (0.28 in 2015).
- Homicides involving a rifle or a shotgun also increased in number (+13) and rate (+34%) in 2016. Police reported 50 homicides involving this type of firearm at a rate of 0.14 per 100,000 population, representing 22% of all firearm-related homicides (Table 5).
- Ontario, with an additional 33 firearm-related homicides in 2016, accounted for much of the national increase. British Columbia (+9), Saskatchewan (+6) and Nova Scotia (+6) also reported a greater number compared to the previous year. The majority of provinces and territories reported a decrease, or stability, in their number of firearm-related homicides. Decreases were reported in Alberta (-5), Manitoba (-2), Newfoundland and Labrador (-1), Quebec (-1), and the Northwest Territories (-1). The number of firearm-related homicides in New-Brunswick (3) and the Yukon (1) remained the same in 2016 compared to the previous year (Table 3) and for the second consecutive year, there were no reported firearm-related homicides in Nunavut.
- The highest rate among provinces for firearm-related homicides was reported in Saskatchewan (1.48), an increase of 52% from the previous year (0.97). The second highest rate was reported in Alberta (1.03). However, its rate represent a decrease of 12% from the previous year (1.17).
- Overall, 78% of all firearm-related homicides in Canada in 2016 were reported in a census metropolitan area (CMA).
- With 51 reported, the CMA of Toronto had the greatest number of firearm-related homicides among the CMAs in 2016. These represented 56% of all its reported homicides. Edmonton CMA reported the second highest number of firearm-related homicides (23), followed by the CMAs of Montréal (22), Vancouver (18), Calgary (14), and Ottawa (12). Halifax's nine firearm-related homicides accounted for 75% of its total number of homicides in 2016 (Table 4). Despite having reported the greatest number of firearm-related homicides, Toronto did not have the highest rate of firearm-related homicides among CMAs (0.82 per 100,000 population). Halifax with 2.11 per 100,000 population reported the highest rate of firearm-related homicides followed by the CMA of Edmonton (1.66 per 100,000 population) and Abbotsford–Mission (1.61 per 100,000 population).
- In 2016, 54% of firearm-related homicides were also related to gang activity compared to 43% in the previous year, representing the greatest proportion since 2009.[Note] The largest increases in the number of gang-related homicides committed with a firearm were reported in Ontario (+22) and British Columbia (+12), with these largely occurring in Toronto and Vancouver. With a total of 30, Toronto saw 18 more gang-related homicides committed with a firearm than in 2015. Vancouver saw six more, reporting a total of 16.
- In 2016, shootings were the most common method of committing a homicide in Canada (38%), exceeding stabbings (30%) for the first time since 2012. Beatings were the third most used method of committing a homicide (20%) (Chart 4).
- The rate of homicides by shooting in 2016 was 21% higher than the average for the previous 10 years (0.61 compared to 0.51 per 100,000 population), while the rate of homicides by stabbing was 15% lower compared to the average for the previous 10 years (0.48 compared to 0.57 per 100,000 population) (Table 6).

Table 5
Firearm-related homicides, by type of firearm, Canada, 1996 to 2016

Year	Handgun		Rifle or shotgun		Sawed-off rifle or shotgun		Other firearm types [1]		Total firearm-related homicides	
	number	rate [2]	number	rate [2]	number	rate [2]	number	rate [2]	number	rate [2]
1996	108	0.36	81	0.27	16	0.05	8	0.03	213	0.72
1997	100	0.33	77	0.26	10	0.03	7	0.02	194	0.65
1998	71	0.24	51	0.17	14	0.05	16	0.05	152	0.50
1999	90	0.30	58	0.19	6	0.02	12	0.04	166	0.55
2000	108	0.35	57	0.19	10	0.03	8	0.03	183	0.60
2001	111	0.36	46	0.15	7	0.02	8	0.03	172	0.55
2002	98	0.31	40	0.13	6	0.02	8	0.03	152	0.48
2003	111	0.35	33	0.10	13	0.04	6	0.02	163	0.52
2004	112	0.35	37	0.12	15	0.05	9	0.03	173	0.54
2005	131	0.41	59	0.18	11	0.03	23	0.07	224	0.69
2006	112	0.34	38	0.12	26	0.08	16	0.05	192	0.59
2007	125	0.38	32	0.10	18	0.05	13	0.04	188	0.57
2008	127	0.38	35	0.11	17	0.05	22	0.07	201	0.60
2009	111	0.33	32	0.10	15	0.04	24	0.07	182	0.54
2010	104	0.31	37	0.11	14	0.04	20	0.06	175	0.51
2011	95	0.28	30	0.09	16	0.05	18	0.05	159	0.46
2012	106	0.31	39	0.11	9	0.03	17	0.05	171	0.49
2013	90	0.26	30	0.09	8	0.02	6	0.02	134	0.38
2014	103	0.29	34	0.10	6	0.02	12	0.03	155	0.44
2015	102	0.28	37	0.10	23	0.06	17	0.05	179	0.50
2016	130	0.36	50	0.14	13	0.04	30	0.08	223	0.61

1 Includes homicides committed with the use of other types of firearms, such as fully-automatic firearms, firearm-like weapons (i.e., nail gun or pellet gun) and firearm-type unknown.

2 Rates are calculated per 100,000 population using revised July 1st population estimates from Statistics Canada, Demography Division.

Note: Numbers may not add up to totals due to rounding.
Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Homicide Survey.