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Canadian Attitudes Toward Gun Control: The Real Story

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Annex B. Cross Tabulations of the Questions by Background and Analytical Variables *Because of the length of this annex (exceeding the length of the paper itself), and its limited utility to many general readers, it is published separately. Copies are available from the publisher and have been provided automatically to academic and institutional readers of the paper.*

Foreword

Opposition makes humanitarians forget the liberal values they claim to uphold. They become petulant, self-righteous, intolerant. In the heat of political controversy, they find it impossible to conceal their contempt for those who stubbornly refuse to see the light - those "who just don't get it," in the self-satisfied jargon of political rectitude.

Simultaneously arrogant and insecure, the new elites, the professional classes in particular, regard the masses with mingled scorn and apprehension.

- Christopher Lasch, The Revolt of the Elites and the Betrayal of Democracy, 1995.

The late Christopher Lasch captured the reality and spirit of Canada's not-yet concluded debate over Bill C-68 and gun control in general. There is a split in Canadian politics, indeed in political behaviour across North America, if not the world. The old Left-Right distinctions have grown largely irrelevant except to mark an old battlefield where old adversaries have not realized the new reality that is upon them. The new rift is between as yet inarticulate populists and an entrenched but sophisticated elite of urban educated professionals.

Traditionally, elites claim to know what is best for the citizenry. Populists would rather make their own choices. When the two collide, the elites ignore the opinions of the great unwashed and prefer to create their own reality. The populists will despise the constructed reality and decide to disobey the edicts of the elites. Each side does not trust the judgement of the other (with ample reason on both parts). Conflict between the two marks the course of the history of the democratic peoples - the English Civil War, the American Revolution, and the 1837 Rebellions being examples.

The split in Canada is very real. It can be observed by voting habits in the 1992 Constitutional Referendum, by the new political mood in English-Canada, and the temper evident in suburban and rural areas. Support for the new Provincial government in Ontario can be traced by telephone area-codes. Populism sells in the 705 and 905 area-codes surrounding Metro Toronto, and is rejected, for now, inside Metro Toronto proper - the 416 and 613 (Ottawa) areas being heavily influenced by the elite. A similar phenomenon can be observed elsewhere in the country.

Gun control is an elite preoccupation and a populist nightmare. In the elite reality, gun owners represent dangerous and unstable people who adhere to pastimes that no sensible person would want to pursue. To populists, a great many of whom are gun-owners, gun control represents an unwarranted interference in private life and individual expression. To the many populists who are becoming concerned with the pace and direction of elite thinking, there is a deep rooted suspicion that, perhaps, there is more to gun control than meets the eye. It does not matter whether this uneasy belief is valid or not, it is dangerous enough that it exists.

So what is one to think of Bill C-68? How else to describe the current Canadian government but as a collection of the ruling elite? How else should one think of the single largest protest movement ever mounted in Canada but as a populist movement? How far down the line will both sides play? Bill C-68 does give police significant new powers. By Canadian standards it is an extraordinarily intrusive and dangerously open-ended piece of legislation. Many gun owners have given ample notice of their intent to ignore the bitterly resented new law.

Gary Mauser and Taylor Buckner make no secret of their own views on Bill C-68. In the passage of the Bill, the Government relied on a public opinion poll that claimed that a vast majority of Canadians supported gun control. Mauser and Buckner undertook a more precise process that reveals an altogether different attitude. It is also the only existing tool that charts how Canadians really viewed gun control during the debate over C-68.

For its part, the Canadian government now has something to answer to. Were its lawyers and policy makers, the very exemplars of a professional governing elite, being careless by not being as detailed as Mauser and Buckner? Or were they deliberately misleading the public? These are questions that must be answered, as several million very unsettled Canadians are still listening very closely.

John C. Thompson
January, 1997

Executive Summary

Although the authors of Bill C-68 claimed to have wide public support for gun control, the evidence of this support was very superficial. What was far more obvious was the widespread and deep opposition to the Bill. The imposition of such controversial legislation is bound to have very serious repercussions.

In January 1995, the authors designed a public opinion poll to determine exactly how Canadians felt about gun control, and whether C-68 was necessary or even desired. The poll and their analysis were conducted according to the proper standards of legitimate statistical analysis. It provides a great many new insights into the debate and may fuel a second round of opposition.

The gun control debate is between two sets of people with opposite values - those who have no problems with owning firearms, and those who hate and fear guns (or gun owners). The authors outlined the two camps by finding out who believes that Canadians should have the right to own firearms and the right to go hunting, and those who believe neither right should exist. About 35% of Canadians are in the first camp, and 24% are in the second. Both parties who adhere to these two basic values have some very complex opinions. The same is true of those in the middle. Incidentally, a similar conflict in values was evidenced during the lead-in to Prohibition.

Early in the paper, the split in opinions and values becomes clear. Canadians with pro-firearms values tend to be male, from the Prairies and from rural/suburban areas. Those with anti-firearms values tend to be female, from Quebec and from urban centres. These, however, are tendencies and the actual picture is much less precise. Differences in education levels, income and age are not too pronounced either, although firearms owners tend to be middle aged and in a middle income bracket.

Very few Canadians know much about gun control, particularly about the many strict regulations in place before Bill C-68 was passed. Of those who oppose gun ownership and hunting, very few really know anything about the law. But then, even only some 20% of gun owners passed the author's criteria for familiarity with existing gun laws. Thus, a debate about the need for increased regulations is rooted in a profound ignorance about the existing laws. Hence, a large part of the demand for gun control may have been rooted in wishful thinking.

Many Canadians say they are worried about violent crime and believe that it is increasing, but only 3% hold this to be the most important public policy concern. Moreover, when Canadians are asked what should be done to limit violent crime, gun control came a distant fourth among the possible responses listed by Canadians. According to the authors, when asked for their opinions on solutions to violent crime, far more Canadians prefer a return to capital punishment to increased gun control.

To add insult to the injuries already done to Ottawa's arguments in favour of gun control, the poll actually found that only 31% of Canadians believe that it would be effective. A minority believes gun control will improve the safety of women, reduce violent crime or reduce the number of suicides - the promised benefits of the legislation. However, a majority believe it will reduce the number of accidental deaths and homicides. This last opinion may be based on the heavy stress placed by the proponents of C-68 on the shooting deaths of women, although this is certainly not the most common form of homicide in Canada.

Attitudes towards Bill C-68's registration system are very complex. Although most Canadians support the program, this support is very soft and falls drastically once the potential costs are mentioned. In sum, gun control sounds nice, but Canadians don't want to pay for it. Hard support for registration, regardless of the costs, is mostly found among those who reject the right to hunt or to own firearms. Interestingly, most gun owners and those with pro-hunting and pro-gun ownership values support registration but with strong reservations about the costs. However, at the time of the poll (January 1995), nearly 30% of gun owners said they would not comply with the registration program. No doubt this figure is much larger today.

Indeed, the authors found evidence that many gun owners will refuse to register their firearms. This finding is consistent with the experiences of other Commonwealth countries. Police in Australia, Great Britain and New Zealand estimate that between 25 and 60% of the firearms' owners in their countries remain unregistered. As a large number of Canadians seem ready to refuse to comply with C-68, one can expect the grey and black markets for firearms in Canada to increase - thus ensuring that the promised benefits of C-68 will not appear. More importantly, the withdrawal of support for the authority of law enforcement agencies by a significant number of Canadians will undermine the existing high levels of support for Canada's legally constituted authorities. Rejection of the firearms laws, coupled with increasing acceptance of tax evasion by many Canadians could seriously erode

the consent to be governed which is the foundation of the democratic system. This erosion will occur among those who have traditionally been the strongest supporters of law and order.

The Coalition for Gun Control alleged that 71% of Canadians supported a complete ban on civilian handguns. In opinion surveys, much depends on the question and how it is asked. Mauser and Buckner asked if Canadians favoured the confiscation of collectors' handguns, but only 20% did. A tiny minority (24%) favoured confiscating target shooter's handguns. Despite the usual Canadian ambivalence towards self-defence, only 48% would take handguns from those who need them for protection. Only 13% of Canadians were willing to always confiscate handguns regardless of the purposes for which they are owned.

All previous attempts by pollsters to determine the extent of firearms ownership in North America have indicated that the presence of firearms appears to be consistently under-reported. This poll found that many respondents refused to answer the question or, if they admitted to the presence of firearms, became reluctant to answer any further questions about ownership. Obviously, there are more firearms and gun owners in the country than Ottawa may realize. Most owners mentioned hunting and collecting as their primary reasons for owning firearms. The unwillingness to discuss personal holdings of firearms supports the earlier indication that compliance with C-68 will be much less than total.

Issues of self-defence are touchy in Canada. However, 60% of respondents said that they would use a firearm to protect themselves or their families if the circumstance arose. Even a majority of those who favoured confiscating handguns which are used for self-defence, would use a firearm for protection. About 2% of respondents said they had used a firearm for the purposes of protection in the past five years. This led the authors to speculate, that if only 5% of these incidents actually did save a life, then perhaps 3,000 lives are saved by firearms in Canada every year. Even in the unlikely event that Bill C-68 did dramatically reduce the annual toll of 1,400 direct gun deaths, it might still cost far more lives than it saves.

Bill C-68 could be an issue in the next election - as a "lose-lose-lose" proposition for its supporters. It seems that gun owners constitute a significant swing vote and are unlikely to support the Bill's proponents. If the issue is raised in the next election, support for it will not garner votes. Indeed, raising the issue of gun control will lose votes if C-68 is seen to be ineffective and/or if harsher new measures are called for by a candidate. To the current government, the issue of gun control is a dead loss in the next Federal election and they would do well to let it lie. To their rivals, the issue is available to be exploited.

Chapter 1. Opening Shots

Authors' Introduction

The 1995 passage of Bill C-68 radically changed firearms legislation in Canada. The Justice Minister who authored the bill claimed strong public backing for the tough measures and cited opinion polls to this effect. However, support for this law has been surprisingly modest. Indeed, it was dominated by a very few special groups such as the Chiefs of Police and the Coalition for Gun Control. In contrast, opposition to C-68 was characterized by a large number of grass roots groups. These included provincial wildlife organizations and firearm-owner groups which sprang up in every province and territory in the country. The bulk of letters written to MP's and Senators came from opponents of C-68. Likewise, all of the rallies on the issue were organized by opponents. None were specifically sponsored by groups supporting the bill. How, then, can the appearance of public opinion differ so much from reality?

Surveys of public opinion on gun control have been superficial. Media polls were limited to one or two questions - which cannot adequately assess public opinion. Issues of public policy such as gun control, the Constitution, abortion, or immigration are necessarily complex and involve a number of interrelated issues. Individuals will differ in the extent of their knowledge, and support for a bill is less meaningful if they do not know what the present laws are, nor understand the implications of the proposals. More importantly, individuals whose sole involvement in the issue of gun control was a verbal response during a telephone interview, probably had not have thought much about the issue, and therefore may have no strong commitment to their opinions. Gun owners, who have a personal stake in the outcome of C-68, are more likely to act upon their beliefs.

To examine patterns of support for C-68, the most comprehensive study of attitudes towards gun control that has ever been done in Canada was conducted. An extensive series of questions was administered by professional interviewers at Canadian Facts to a sample of over 1,500 Canadian adults. Interviews were conducted in all provinces in Canada between January 18 and 23, 1995. The survey was funded by the Langley Symposium of Responsible Firearms Owners. In contrast to superficial media polls, the study does not show strong support for C-68. Instead, it found that support for universal firearms registration, the keystone of this law, was astonishingly shallow and based upon widespread and profound ignorance about existing firearms legislation. Almost half of those who said they favoured registration changed their minds when informed of its possible costs. Another finding was that the public did not view gun control to be the solution to criminal violence. Instead, they suggested a variety of changes in the justice system to solve the problem.

The survey's results showed that few Canadians were familiar with the existing state of gun control prior to the passage of C-68. Regulations in place since C-51 passed in 1978 were unknown to many people. Opinions about the effectiveness of further gun control legislation were based almost entirely upon wishful thinking.

Perhaps the most important finding was that Canadians are profoundly divided over the principles that underlay C-68. The meaning of symbols, like beauty, is to be found in the eye of the beholder. While firearms symbolize violence to some; for many others, they represent self reliance and freedom. The survey shows that opinions about C-68 stem from deeply held cultural values. Many urban residents do not favour legal firearms ownership in Canada and supported C-68 in an attempt to reduce the number of Canadian firearms owners. Opposition to the bill was rooted in rural and suburban Canada. The moral campaign against guns is reminiscent of the campaign to prohibit alcohol earlier in this century. Alcohol prohibition was an attempt to impose rural values upon urban dwellers; C-68 reflects a crusade by urbanites to impose their values upon rural Canada.

The introduction of draconian legislation needlessly exacerbates deep divisions within Canadian society and can undermine support for the police and possibly even law and order itself. C-68 is draconian. Its provision for universal firearms registration, for example, requires a bureaucratic system of staggering complexity. The law has other contentious points - sweeping powers for police searches and harsher penalties for violating rules on gun ownership than for actually using a firearm in the commission of a violent offence are two examples. Universal firearms registration has never worked any place in world where it has been tried. New Zealand abandoned registration a decade ago and, based upon the experience of the State of Victoria, the Australian government rejected a plan to introduce nationwide firearms registration in 1995.

The government claims that additional gun control is needed because there is a public health problem with firearms. However, it was unable to document this claim. In 1991, Ottawa brought in C-17 to make sweeping

changes to Canadian firearms laws. C-68 was introduced before these changes could even be evaluated. This led to a widespread suspicion that this law is largely motivated by partisan political concerns.

It is crucial to examine how firearms owners and their families view this legislation. These are the very people who must cooperate with the police if the legislation is to work. No law can be enforced if those principally affected by it do not support it. Unfortunately, the Justice Minister seemingly made no real effort to consult with Canadian firearms owners. Moreover, C-68 was rammed through Parliament with little sign of respect for traditions of compromise or for the concerns raised in caucus or by other parties. This is not propitious. C-68 provoked unprecedented opposition. In contrast, C-51 and C-17 had supporters in the firearms community, but firearms owners almost universally view C-68 as a partisan ploy which will be ineffective in fighting crime. Voluntary cooperation with the registration scheme may very well be problematic.

Our results show that many firearms owners will not register their firearms. This is consistent with the experience in other Commonwealth countries. The police in Australia, Great Britain, and New Zealand estimated that between 25% and 60% of the firearms in their countries remain unregistered. If a large number of Canadian firearm owners did not register their firearms, there would be serious implications. First, the 'grey' and black markets of firearms will increase as previously law-abiding firearms owners decide not to bother with the newly-imposed procedures. Second, the decision not to register a firearm will only make these otherwise law-abiding gun owners vulnerable to prosecution. Third, as a large number of firearms will remain outside the registration system, C-68 will not deliver its promised benefits.

Most importantly, the withdrawal of support for the authority of the police by a significant number of gun owners will undermine the present high-level of support for legally constituted authority in Canada. Rejection of the firearms law, coupled with widespread growth of tax evasion techniques by many Canadians, may significantly undermine the basis of law and order in Canada among those who are currently its staunchest supporters.

The History of Gun Control in Canada

Firearms laws in Canada have become increasingly restrictive over the past century. Permits were first required for carrying handguns outside of one's house in 1892. Carry permits for handguns grew restrictive until 1934 when handguns were registered. Since that time, handgun registration became increasingly centralized. In 1977, Parliament passed C-51 which, among other things, prohibited a number of firearms and introduced the Firearms Acquisition Certificate (FAC). For the first time Canadians had to submit to police scrutiny before they could purchase any firearm.

In 1991, Parliament passed C-17, an omnibus firearms law. The government justified this legislation by the brutal murder of 14 women at the Ecole Polytechnique by Marc Lepine. Among other things, C-17 prohibited a number of semi-automatic firearms and restricted a number of other firearms. It prohibited "high capacity" magazines, spawned bureaucratic rules for safe handling and safe storage, introduced "reverse onus" provisions for firearms applicants and a centralized training program for prospective firearms owners. Concomitant to C-17, the Minister of Justice tightened up many procedures for dealing with firearms owners, including a lengthy new application form for the FAC.

Despite the 1992 introduction of C-17, the new Liberal Justice Minister vowed to introduce still more restrictive firearms laws after the 1993 federal elections. In November 1994, he introduced an outline of his planned legislation, and in February 1995, over the objections of many Liberal MP's, he introduced C-68. Rushing this law through the House Justice Committee, the Justice Minister vowed he would not accept any amendments to his law. Thus, he rejected input from the Reform Party, the Bloc Québécois and even his own party. Despite the largest protest ever mounted in the history of Canada, the law was passed by the House of Commons on June 13, 1995. It was passed through the Senate on November 22, 1995, and was proclaimed on December 5, 1995 in time for the sixth anniversary of the Montreal murders.

Chapter 2. Methodology of the Survey and Analysis

Methodology of the Survey

This report presents the findings of a national survey of attitudes towards firearms and gun control conducted by Canadian Facts on behalf of Professor Gary A. Mauser, Simon Fraser University, and Professor Taylor Buckner, then of Concordia University (and now retired). It was funded by the Langley Symposium of Responsible Firearms Owners.

A total of 1,505 interviews were conducted with Canadians 18 years of age or older in all provinces between January 18 and 26, 1995. Interviews were conducted over the telephone by trained and experienced interviewers from 9 facilities across Canada. Interviewing was continually monitored and supervised by Canadian Facts using a computer aided telephone interviewing system [CATI].

A plus-digit dialling method was utilized to select a random sample of telephone numbers in order to provide coverage of all households with telephones in all ten Canadian provinces. Households in the territories were excluded. A disproportionate sampling design was chosen in order to obtain a sufficient number of responses from less populated regions. This enabled more reliable statistical comparisons to be made between regions. Interviews were conducted in five regions across Canada: 275 in BC, 326 in the Prairies, 350 in Ontario, 351 in Quebec, and 203 in the Maritimes. The questionnaire and interviewer instructions were translated into French for interviewing in Quebec. Within each region, interviews were proportionate to the population in order to provide adequate representation for rural and urban residents. In order to represent the Canadian population as a whole, the results were weighted to reflect the actual proportions of households in Canada.

A sample this size has a sampling error of ± 2.5 % points. This means that means that the results are accurate within 2.5 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level. The sampling errors of the regional estimates are correspondingly larger due to the smaller sample sizes.

	<u>Sample Size</u>	<u>Sampling Error</u>
BC	275	$\pm 6.0\%$ points
Prairies	326	$\pm 5.5\%$ points
Ontario	350	$\pm 5\%$ points
Quebec	351	$\pm 5\%$ points
Maritimes	203	$\pm 7\%$ points
Canada	1,505	$\pm 2.5\%$ points

Within each household, an adult respondent was randomly selected to be interviewed using the next-birthday method to ensure proportionate representation of all ages of both male and female residents. All calls were placed in evenings between 4:30 pm and 9:30 pm on weekdays and between 10:00 am and 4:00 pm on Saturday to ensure the inclusion of working individuals.

Up to five calls were made to each residence in an attempt to obtain a completed interview with a qualified respondent. No substitutions were permitted at the household or individual selection stages. The completion rate for this study was relatively high in comparison to similar studies. The highest completion rates achieved were in the Maritimes and Prairies at 41%, the lowest completion rate was in Toronto with just 26%.

The questionnaire used in this survey was developed by the authors in conjunction with Canadian Facts in order to accommodate the questionnaire into the CATI format. The final draft of the questionnaire was pretested the day before interviewing began in Vancouver. Minor revisions were made in question wording in order to ensure that the interviews flowed smoothly. A copy of the final version of the questionnaire is appended to this report.

Methodology of the Analysis

For this analysis, Weighted Representative Samples were used in almost all cases. The purpose of the analysis is to give an idea of the national views and attitudes, so the weighted sample is appropriate. For some specific tables involving small numbers of cases, such as in the self-defense chapter, the unweighted sample was used because of an interest in individual instances rather than a national average. These exceptions are always noted in the tables.

Each Chapter provides the weighted frequencies for each question, and examines each question in terms of the possible influences of the respondents' backgrounds. These include:

- the "region" of the country in which the respondent lives including Quebec vs. the Rest of Canada (because Quebec *is* distinct).
- The size of the community in which the respondent lives (under 10,000; 10,000 to 500,000; over 500,000).
- The gender of the respondent.
- The age group in which the respondent falls (18 to 34; 35 to 49; 50 to 92 - which roughly divides the population into thirds).
- The educational level of the respondent (grades 1 to 12; high-school graduate; some college or university; University Graduate - which roughly divides the population into quarters).
- Whether the respondent is a gun-owner (none; in home but not owner; owner).
- The basic values of the respondent (whether Canadians should have the right to own a gun; whether the respondent favours or opposes hunting; a typology of the two).
- Whether the respondent knows two or more factual items about the current law;
- Whether the respondent feels he or she is "very familiar" with the current law; whether or not the respondent discusses firearms and gun control "frequently" or not.
- Whether the respondent feels that stricter gun control is "effective" (not effective; neutral; is effective).
- Whether the respondent supports universal registration of firearms ("none," no registration; "soft," registration under some circumstances; "Hard," registration under all circumstances at any cost).
- Whether the respondent supports confiscation of handguns ("none," no confiscation; "some," confiscate some types; "all," confiscate all types of handguns).

Underlying this progression is an assumption about the nature of causality - that basic demographic factors, such as region of the country, rural or urban residence, gender, age, education and income exert their primary influence on the basic values of the respondents. These values, plus knowledge and salience of gun control, then influence perceptions of problems. Background, knowledge, and perceptions of problems then influence perceptions of the utility of gun control.

Perceptions of the utility of gun control, along with basic values and knowledge, then influence attitudes towards issues such as universal registration, the confiscation of handguns, and support or opposition to politicians who favour these measures.

In addition, somewhat out of this causal sequence, the backgrounds of firearms owners, and those who have used firearms for self-defence are analysed.

Throughout the analysis the fundamental influence of values, and of gun ownership will be discussed. In general the results are presented in percentage tables.

Note: Those who might require cross tabulation of all the questions by background and analytic variables may find them in Appendix B. Further details, such as Chi-square values, probability significance levels and measures of association (such as gamma and phi) and other relationships of relevance to professional readers of statistical data are available from the authors.

Chapter 3. Canadians and Firearms - Basic Values

Values guide actions and beliefs. They influence perceptions of the world and allow us to make distinctions between "good" and "evil." Values are culturally transmitted, often by parents, increasingly by the media. In an important sense values are not open to discussion, they are articles of faith. Evidence contrary to an individual's values is generally ignored or rejected. People may change their minds about many things based on comparative evidence, but values tend to remain in place. When someone changes their values it is a dramatic personal event, sometimes termed a "conversion." Values play an important, though often denied, role in gun control debates. Someone with anti-gun values is likely to support anything called gun control, someone with pro-gun values is likely to resist anything called gun control. As a matter of intellectual consistency, values lead people to patterns of belief and assumptions about the workings of the world that they come to believe reflect the natural order of things, and are "common sense."

Two questions were asked to determine basic values. First: "Do you agree or disagree that Canadian citizens should have the right to own a firearm?" This question does not refer to the American Constitutional right to keep and bear arms, but just whether a Canadian should or should not have the right to own a firearm. Second: "Do you generally favour or oppose hunting?" Undoubtedly there are other basic values which come into the issue, but the time or funds were lacking to ask about respect for life; security; self-preservation; self reliance; or independence. The two questions, "right" and "hunt," do, however, provide a powerful index of the underlying assumptions of the respondents.

Rights

Support and opposition to gun control, smoke screens and partial analogies aside, depends to a great extent on views of the place of firearms in Canadian society. Some citizens have little or no tolerance for guns and arguments about recreational use or wildlife management are meaningless to them. Those who lawfully own firearms find the views of the first group incomprehensible. However, the gun control debate is not carried on at the level of values to determine whether Canadians do or do not have the right to own firearms. It is conducted at the level of assumed outcomes, debating instead whether laws and regulations can affect violence against women, or death rates from homicide, suicide and accidents. Thus, it is never resolved.

For the first party, statistics are irrelevant as guns are bad in themselves. Arguments from firearms owners and their allies, who say that rates of misuse are not high and that regulations are ineffective, strike the first party as self serving sophistry. Firearms owners are reluctant and bewildered participants in a debate they did not start. They were willing to follow the reasonable laws of C-51 and C-17 but felt betrayed when these actions did not end the debate.

Canada's Aboriginals are the wild-cards in the debate. High rates of violence in some communities and an apparent willingness by a few of them to use firearms in disputes with government are confounded with treaty rights. Generally, aboriginal firearms-use constitutes an unvoiced sub-text in the debate.

At the level of values, the basic question is whether or not Canadians have the right to own firearms. Canadian gun owners are not campaigning for "the right to keep and bear arms," but for a restoration of the right to own and use firearms within a framework of reasonable laws. Those who disagree seem to be taking the more absolute position that no one should have firearms.

Do Canadians value the right to own a firearm?

Q11.5 Do you agree or disagree that Canadian Citizens should have the right to own a firearm?		
<u>Responses</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Agree strongly	418	27.8
Agree somewhat	421	28.0
Disagree somewhat	209	13.9
Disagree strongly	400	26.6
<u>Don't know</u>	<u>57</u>	<u>3.7</u>
Total Responses	1,505	100.0

Overall, 56% agreed that Canadians should have the right, 40% disagreed, and 4% were undecided. Throughout Canada a majority which ranged from 74% in the Prairie provinces to 62% in Ontario supported the right to own a firearm. However, in Quebec only 36% supported it and 64% disagreed. This difference cannot be caused by

different levels of gun ownership alone: Reid (1991) reports Quebec gun ownership at 23%, the national average according to their calculations. Our figures showed gun ownership in Quebec at 20%, below the national average of 28%, but not far from Ontario's rate at 21%. In rural areas, 72% supported the right to own a firearm, as did 60% of those living in small and medium sized cities. In the large cities 52% opposed it. This is the fundamental rural-urban conflict of values.

Some 69% of men support the right to own a firearm, 53% of women oppose it. A majority of persons of all age groups support the right to own a firearm, as do a majority of persons of all educational levels. A majority of people at all income levels support the right to own a firearm. Half of non-gun owners support the right to own a firearm, while, not surprisingly, 86% of gun owners support it. Finally, there is an extremely high correlation between views on hunting and the right to own a firearm. Among those who strongly favour hunting, 82% support the right, among those who strongly oppose hunting, 65% oppose it.

Values are the real battlefield. Those who oppose the right to own a firearm favour all forms of restriction, and argue in terms of presumed benefits - instead of simply saying they do not like guns. Those who support the right to own a gun see further restrictions as a negation of a right they believe in, argue on a cost-benefit basis - a more politic strategy than simply saying they like guns. Both positions reflect fundamentally opposed, but unspoken, value assumptions. Both sides feel the other is arguing in bad faith from a flawed outlook.

Do Canadians value Hunting?

Q 25. Do you generally favour or oppose hunting?		
<u>Responses</u>	<u>Numbers</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Strongly Favour	323	21.4
Somewhat Favour	450	29.9
Somewhat Oppose	280	18.6
Strongly Oppose	359	23.9
Refused	2	.2
<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>91</u>	<u>6.0</u>
Total Responses	1,505	100.0

Overall, 51% favoured hunting, 43% opposed it and 6% were undecided. Support for hunting is highest in the Atlantic provinces (72%), and lowest (51%) in British Columbia. Quebec (58%) is somewhat more supportive of hunting than the Rest of Canada (53%).

Of respondents in rural areas, 73% favour hunting while 57% of those in large cities oppose it. Of men, 67% favour hunting while 57% of women do not. A majority of people in all age groups favour hunting, with support highest among those in the oldest age group. Support for hunting is weakly but inversely related to education, with 59% of those who have not finished high school in favour, and only 49% of university graduates in favour. There is no significant relationship between income and attitudes on hunting.

Gun owners (86%) favour hunting, while 55% of non-gun owners oppose it. Among those who agree strongly with the right to own a firearm 77% favour hunting, while 68% of those who strongly disagree oppose hunting too.

Attitudes on these two basic values drive the gun control debate, but are rarely mentioned. One of the rules of discourse in our rational society is that proposals have to be justified on utilitarian grounds. If someone was to say, "I am for gun control because I don't like guns and no one should have them," or, "I am against gun control because I like guns and want to keep mine," no further discussion would be fruitful.

Proponents of additional gun controls have frequently been heard to say, "We don't want to confiscate your hunting guns, or stop legitimate gun use." But is this really true? An indication that they may be concealing their basic values comes when it is suggested that controls will be costly and ineffective. Proponents of new controls have talked about the benefits of gun control twenty years from now, without always specifying that this is a society in which no one but government agents will have guns. The gun sub-culture, wherein parents teach their children how to shoot and hunt, is apparently to be extinguished.

Many Canadians are second or third generation urbanites who think hunting is barbaric. Their conception of hunting and hunters is sometimes quite fantastic. Among people we questioned in other surveys a frequently mentioned image is of a drunken hunter shooting animals for the joy of killing, and leaving the bodies to rot in the field. Few think of the lower income family man purchasing a permit, hunting under strict regulations designed for wildlife management, in the hope of feeding his family better for the winter.

While the two values, right and hunting, both influence opinions on gun control, the two combined make for a better delineation of the value conflict in the gun control debate.

Cross Tabulation: Right to Own and Attitude on Hunting (Table percentages - each cell represents the percent of the total 1,505 cases)

<u>Canadians should have right to go hunting</u>	<u>Canadians should have the right to own a firearm</u>				<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Hunt Totals</u>
	<u>Agree Strongly</u>	<u>Agree Somewhat</u>	<u>Disagree Somewhat</u>	<u>Disagree Strongly</u>		
<u>Strongly Favour</u>	13%	4%	2%	2%	1%	21%
<u>Somewhat Favour</u>	8%	10%	4%	6%	1%	30%
<u>Somewhat Oppose</u>	3%	6%	3%	6%	0%	19%
<u>Strongly Oppose</u>	3%	5%	4%	11%	0%	24%
<u>Don't Know</u>	2%	2%	4%	1%	1%	6%
<u>Right Totals</u>	28%	2%	14%	27%	4%	100%

Right to Own and Attitude on Hunting Typology

<u>Combined Responses:</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Right and Hunt	529	35.1
Mixed (all other response)	609	40.5
<u>No Right and No Hunt</u>	<u>368</u>	<u>24.4</u>
Total Responses	1,505	100.0

Responses are grouped in three categories: those who think Canadians should have the right to own a firearm and who favour hunting (the top left dark rectangle, 35% of the total), those who oppose the right to own a firearm and oppose hunting (the lower right dark rectangle, 24% of the total), and those whose responses were mixed or undecided (all the other cases, 41% of the total).

Half of the respondents in Atlantic Canada, and nearly half (49%) in the Prairie provinces fall in the "Right and Hunt" category, British Columbia, at 39% was lower, followed by Ontario at 32%, and Quebec, 25%. The "No Right No Hunt" value position was strongest at 31% in Quebec, as opposed to 22% in the Rest of Canada. A clear majority, 53%, of rural Canadians have "Right and Hunt" values, while only 23% of the residents of large cities do so. Residents of the largest cities generally have "mixed" values, 45% do, while 32% are in the "No Right No Hunt" camp.

One of the strongest distinctions is between the values of men and women. Forty seven percent of men, and 24% of women, have "Right and Hunt" values, while 15% of men and 34% of women have "No Right No Hunt" values. Older respondents are a bit more likely to have "Right and Hunt" values, and younger respondents are a bit more likely to hold the reverse position, but the difference is not significant. People with lower levels of education are more likely to have "Right and Hunt" values, while people with higher levels of education are more likely to have "No Right No Hunt" values. There is no significant difference in the values held by people of different income groups.

A quarter of non-gun owners have "Right and Hunt" values, while almost three-quarters (72%) of gun owners hold these values.

A multiple regression analysis was run entering all of these background values to see what was really important in the formation of "Right and Hunt" and "No Right No Hunt" values. It explained 22% of the variance. Those from the Prairie provinces, males, rural residents, and gun owners tend to have "Right and Hunt" values. Those from Quebec, large city residents, females, and non-gun owners tended to have "No Right No Hunt" values. Age, education and income were not significantly related to either position..

Value Concerns

From the "No Right No Hunt" point of view the goal of gun control is to reduce the number of firearms in the country, to reduce firearms use, and reduce hunting. If both can be eliminated, even better.

From this perspective, gun control has already been extremely effective in reducing participation in shooting sports and hunting. In August, 1995, one author asked 27 expert representatives of wildlife and shooting federations from across Canada, to evaluate the effect on their sports of C-17, which was passed in 1991, with major provisions coming into effect in 1993. These experts indicated that membership in the shooting clubs they knew about had declined by 14%. Turnout for competitions involving pistol shooting had declined by 23%, rifle competitions 14%, shotgun competitions (trap and skeet) by 25%. The number of hunting licenses issued declined by nearly 13%. The number of firearm retailers declined by 21%. The political involvement of gun owners in the gun control debate, according to these experts, increased by 50% during the same period. These figures are hardly definitive; and represent only the averaged educated guesses of people deeply involved in recreational firearms use. While the accuracy of the percentage declines may be questioned, the overall trend is clear.

The decline in hunting licenses has direct and indirect costs for wildlife management. Much of wildlife management is paid for by hunting licenses, and if hunters can not be counted on to control excess populations many more animals will starve and crop damage will increase. There are also economic costs associated with the decline in other shooting sports. It appears that it is easy to discourage the law abiding Canadian from participating in a sport by simply increasing the regulations every year. For those with "No Right No Hunt" values these arguments are irrelevant, and a decline in hunting is a victory.

The RCMP reports a stunning drop in the issuance of new Firearms Acquisition Certificates (FACs) - another success from the "No Right No Hunt" value point of view. If we take the rate of FACs issued from 1984 to 1990, about 600 per 100,000 as the normal rate, there will probably be a rebound from the low 1994 rate of 169 per 100,000,. With the new regulations, many will be discouraged from applying for acquisition rights with the new Firearms Possession Permits. Additionally, a number of firms have been forced out of business.

C-68 will work extremely well at promoting the values of those who are in the "No Right No Hunt" camp. With C-68's 39,000 words and bewildering complexities, few gun-owners or police officers will be certain whether an act is criminal. It will allow the government to ban any firearm it wishes, regardless of whether it is commonly used in hunting or target shooting. It will add layer after layer of regulations for shooting clubs, create five kinds of Firearms Possession Permits and five categories of Prohibited weapons, some grandfathered, some not. It will discourage even more people from recreational firearms use through increasing costs and red tape.

Conclusions

Values are important in the gun control debate. Those who have anti-firearms values can be expected to support any measures which restrict firearms use. Those who have pro-firearms values can be expected to oppose these measures. Logic and reason are of little use when it comes to values. Emotion and a sense of right and wrong are the foundations of value disputes. Just as partisans in the abortion debate are seldom converted by the arguments of the opposition, those who have pro and anti firearms values are probably not open to argument.

Two basic value conflicts in the gun control debate are over the right to own firearms and opinions on hunting. When these two positions are combined into a single measure the outlines of the value conflict become clear. On one side we have central Canadian urbanites, women, and non-gun owners. On the other side are those from the hinterlands, rural residents, males, and gun owners. While one may find a female non-gun owning Montreal resident who supports the right to own a firearm and favours hunting, or a male gun-owning rural prairie resident who thinks no one should have the right to own a gun or hunt, they are exceptions.

Much of the gun control debate reflects these values, and while people may talk of the techniques or effectiveness of gun control, they are often simply voicing their value positions.

Chapter 4. Knowledge and Salience of the Current Gun Control Laws

There are probably a few hundred people in Canada who have a reasonably comprehensive grasp of current firearm control legislation. None of the respondents in this survey appear to be among them.

Public opinion surveys encourage people to express opinions. When interpreting these opinions it is useful to know whether they are based on a sound grasp of the issue, or are less well grounded. If a person supports a change in the law, do they know what the current law is? In the ordinary course of events, one pays more attention to those who are well informed than to those who professes ignorance. This relationship may not always hold - some politicians can find controversial projects are easier to complete if the public is not well informed.

Gauging people's levels of knowledge through a survey requires a number of judgements. What knowledge is relevant? How much knowledge is necessary to say that a person is reasonably well informed? How is it to be measured?

We decided to use a combination of subjective and objective approaches. First we asked how familiar respondents thought they were with the present Canadian firearms law, followed by factual questions to see how much they really knew. Roberts (1994: 84), in a review of research carried out for the Department of Justice titled, "Public Knowledge of Crime and Justice," wrote:

"Research conducted for the Department of Justice in 1992 and 1993 sheds light on public awareness of gun control legislation in Canada. On both occasions, respondents were asked if they had heard anything about "new Canadian gun control laws" and on both occasions more than two thirds of the public responded affirmatively (Insight Canada, 1994).

"Moving to the level of familiarity shows less public awareness. In 1992, a Decima poll asked respondents to state how familiar they were with gun control legislation. Only 9% responded that they were "very familiar". A further 37% were "somewhat familiar", while more than half said they were not very, or not at all familiar with the legislation (Decima, 1993)...

"As with other areas of legislative activity reviewed in this paper, awareness did not correspond to accurate knowledge of specific provisions. In fact, one quarter of the respondents who had heard about the new gun laws could not identify any specific reforms introduced by the laws (Insight Canada, 1994)."

Our findings are similar. We asked, "How familiar would you say you are with the present Canadian firearms laws?" Eight percent said "very familiar," 33% said "somewhat familiar," and 59% said "not very" or "not at all familiar," or replied that they did not know.

Q4. How familiar would you say you are with present Canadian firearms laws? Would you say (READ LIST)?		
Responses	Number	Percent
Very Familiar	120	8.0
Somewhat Familiar	501	33.3
Not very Familiar	476	31.6
Not at all Familiar	401	26.7
Don't Know	7	.4
Total Responses	1505	100.0

After examining "Familiarity" in combination with a number of other variables it became clear that only those who said they were "very familiar" with the law had even a passing acquaintance with it. Some of the rest might have meant that they knew Canada had a law, and so were familiar with that fact. For analysis, then, responses to "Familiarity" are condensed into "Very", and "Less," which includes all the remaining replies.

Overall 8% of respondents said they were "very familiar" with the current law. Respondents in British Columbia were most likely to say they were "very familiar" (13%) while respondents in Quebec were the least likely to give the same response. People in rural areas were slightly more likely to say they were "very familiar," (11%) than people in cities of any size (7%). Men were significantly more likely to say they were "very familiar" (12%) with the law than women (4%). The same difference exists between older people (11%) and younger (5%). Those with higher incomes were more likely to say they were "very familiar" (11%) with the law than those with lower incomes.

These results can be partially explained by gun ownership, which is more prevalent amongst males and rural people. Among gun owners, 30% claimed to be "very familiar" with the present law, while only 4% of non-gun owners made the same claim. Of those with "Right and Hunt" values, 15% said they were "very familiar" with the law, but only 2% of those with the opposite values said they were "very familiar" with the law.

Sixteen percent of those who knew two or more factual items about the law said they were "very familiar" with the law, while 7% of those who did not know two or more factual items said they were "very familiar" with the law. People who discuss firearms and gun control frequently are significantly more likely to say they are "very familiar" (30%) with the law than those who discuss firearms and gun control less often (5%).

A person's notion of how familiar they are with a law is highly subjective. With the same level of knowledge one person might say she was very familiar with the law, another that he was not. A person who knew how staggeringly complex the current law is, might quite reasonably say they were not very familiar with it. Another person who has a fragment of knowledge might not know just how much there is to know, and say they were very familiar with it. On the other hand, any objective test of familiarity with the law is, of necessity, limited to a few questions, and a person might be quite well informed about provisions of the law not covered by the questions.

Objective Measures of Knowledge

Q5. If a Canadian who has never owned a firearm wants to buy a rifle or shotgun for the first time, can they go to a store and buy it or do they have to do something first?		
Responses	Number	Percent
Go to the store and buy it	140	9.3
Do something else first	1227	81.5
Don't Know	138	9.2
Total Responses	1505	100.0

Some 18% of the respondents either thought a first time gun buyer could just go to a store and buy a gun (9%), or did not know (9%). A huge majority knew that the potential buyer has to do something first before going to the store. This question, being so basic, does not discriminate well. There were no significant differences between regions of Canada, between rural and urban residents, or between those with differing levels of education. Women were slightly more likely to say they did not know the answer, younger people, gun owners, and those who strongly favour hunting were significantly more likely to know that something had to be done.

Multiple Unaided Responses	Number	Percentage
Take a government safety course	322	21.4
Produce letters of reference	20	1.3
Apply to the police to get a permit (FAC)	713	47.3
Have the store keep an official record of their name and address	26	1.7
Total Responses	1,508	**

* Each item had a potential total response of 1,505. The number beside each item is the number of people who said something had to be done and mentioned that item. Some people mentioned two or three items, others none.

** The percentages are not totalled as they do not include those who said "just go to store and buy," or "don't know," to the screening question, or those who gave some other answer or said they did not know what had to be done in response to this question.

Canadian law has required potential gun buyers to have a "police permit" or FAC since 1978, so the fact that almost half of the respondents knew this is unsurprising. Firearm retailers have had to keep a record of the name, address and Firearms Acquisition Certificate Number of purchasers since 1978, but this is obviously not well known. The requirements for letters of reference and the safety course were introduced in 1993. About one in five respondents mentioned the safety course, but only 1% mentioned that applicants for a FAC needed letters of reference.

As much of the controversy around C-68 has been about handguns, the question was asked "What is the maximum penalty in Canada for having a handgun that is not registered with the police?" As previous research at Concordia University found that only 1% of the students knew that there is a five year penalty, a much higher level of knowledge in the general population was not anticipated. One might think such a question could discriminate between those who really knew the law and those who did not, but it appears that many respondents simply guessed.

Q7. What is the maximum penalty in Canada for having a handgun that is not registered with the police?		
Responses	Number	Percent
No Penalty	20	1.3
A fine	110	7.3
Less than one year in prison	27	1.8
Between one and four years in prison	84	5.6
Five years in prison (correct answer)	44	2.9
More than five years in prison	37	2.4
Other	40	2.7
Don't know	1,143	76.0
Total Responses	1,505	100.0

Overall only 3% knew or guessed the correct answer. Even gun owners were not significantly more likely to know than non-gun owners. Among handgun owners, who should know because a copy of this part of the law comes printed on a slip enclosed with their registration certificate, only 11% knew the correct answer. As Roberts noted in his study, "...awareness did not correspond to accurate knowledge of specific provisions."

Answers to the "what do they have to do?" and "handgun penalty" questions were combined into a single scale of "knowledge." There were five factual items: knowing of the safety course; the reference requirements; store records; the necessity of Firearms Acquisition Permits; and the five year maximum penalty for unregistered handguns. The five responses were counted in each case, and it was determined that anyone who gave two or more correct responses "knew" the law. Obviously this is not a very high level of knowledge, but only 13% of the respondents qualified. A single correct response could not be taken as an indicator of knowledge as gun control has been in the media more or less constantly since 1988 - but only 15 respondents (1% of the sample) gave three or more responses.

Index of "Knowledge" of current Firearms Control Laws		
The Respondent:	Number	Percent
Knows none of five items	588	39.1
Knows one of five items	726	48.2
Knows two of five items	176	11.7
Knows three of five items	14	1.0
Knows four of five items	1	.1
Knows all five items	0	.0
Total Responses	1,505	100.0

"Knowledge" was very unevenly distributed across Canada. In Quebec 20% knew two or more items, in the rest of Canada it was only 10%. There were no significant differences between rural and urban respondents, education levels, or income brackets. Sixteen percent of men and 10% of women knew two or more items. Younger respondents were twice as likely to know two or more items (15%) as older respondents (7%).

Of gun owners, 20% knew two or more items, against 11% of non-gun owners. Those who supported "Right and Hunt" values were significantly more likely to know two or more items than those who opposed them. Twenty-six percent of those who said they were "very familiar" with the law knew two or more items, as opposed to 12% of those less familiar with the law. People who discussed firearms and gun control "frequently" were almost twice as likely to know two or more items (20%) as those who discussed firearms and gun control less frequently (12%).

Salience of the Firearms Law

One way to determine whether is an issue is meaningful to someone is to ask if they talk about it with peers. Talk generates and sustains realities. Talk may be idle or informed, it may reaffirm values or be a factual discussion. Just discussing a topic casually may not make one particularly knowledgeable about it.

How often do Canadians discuss the subject of firearms or gun control in Canada with friends, relatives or co-workers? A total of 36.1% said they had such discussions frequently or occasionally, but only 10.6% said frequently. Firearms and firearms control are not pressing or salient issues for the majority of Canadians.

Q9. How often do you discuss the subject of firearms or gun control in Canada with your friends, relatives or co-workers? Would you say (READ LIST)		
Responses:	Number	Percent
Frequently	159	10.6
Occasionally	384	25.5
Rarely	574	38.1
Never	386	25.7
Don't Know	2	.1
Total Responses	1,505	100.0

After examining the impact of the frequency of discussion on a number of other issues, the categories were collapsed into "Frequently," and "Less," which includes all other responses. A person who discusses firearms and gun control "occasionally" may mean once a year or less.

While 11% discuss guns or gun control "frequently" across Canada, there are significant differences between regions. In BC, 14% say they discuss guns or gun control "frequently," as do 15% in the Prairie provinces and only 5% in Quebec. People in rural areas are almost twice as likely (15%) as people in large cities (8%) to discuss guns frequently. Men (13%) are more likely than women (8%) to discuss guns and gun control "frequently." Older people (14%) are significantly more likely to discuss the issue than younger people (9%). Frequent discussions of guns and gun control are inversely correlated with education; among those who have not finished high school, 14% discuss guns "frequently," while only 7% of university graduates do so.

For obvious reasons, gun owners (27%) are much more likely to discuss guns and gun control "frequently" than non-gun owners (7%). People who hold "Right and Hunt" values are twice as likely (16%) to discuss firearms "frequently" as people who hold "No Right No Hunt" values.

Values, Knowledge and Salience

The basic values which people have influence their actions. Only a minority of Canadians are interested in firearms and firearm control, but in that minority those who hold "Right and Hunt" values are much more likely than others to say that they are "very familiar" with the current law, to actually know two or more elements of the current law, and to discuss firearms and gun control "frequently."

Basic Values and Familiarity, Knowledge and Discussion of Current Laws			
Indicators of Knowledge and Salience	Right to Own and Attitude Toward Hunting Typology		
	Right and Hunt	Mixed	No Right No Hunt
Percent saying they are "very familiar" with current law	15%	5%	2%
Percent actually knowing two or more factual items	17%	10%	11%
Percent discussing guns and gun control frequently	16%	7%	8%
Total Responses	529	609	368

These three indicators point to the relative importance of firearms for those with the "Right and Hunt" value orientation, and their relative lack of importance for those with the "No Right No Hunt" value orientation.

Gun Ownership, Knowledge and Salience

If values are important, activity has even more direct influence on actions. Gun ownership in Canada is not a casual affair for most owners. A study done for the Department of Justice (Reid 1991:Table 9) found that in 49% of firearm-owning households, a member of the household had received safety instruction in the last five years. Following the implementation of C-17's requirement that all applicants for an FAC pass the Canadian Firearms Safety Course, this figure will undoubtedly rise. The course covers firearm legislation in great detail, so it is logical to expect that gun owners will become even more informed about legal issues than they are now. Moreover, the following table clearly demonstrates that firearms owners are far more acquainted with the laws on ownership.

Indicators of Knowledge and Salience	Gun Ownership		
	None	In Home, Not Owner	Owner
Percent saying they are "very familiar" with current law	4%	5%	30%
Percent actually knowing two or more factual items	11%	15%	20%
Percent discussing guns and gun control "frequently"	7%	15%	27%
Total Responses	1136	127	242

The discrepancy between a basically uninformed public which calls for ever increasing restrictions on firearms, and increasingly informed gun-owners guarantees conflict. At the time the survey was taken (January, 1995) fewer than 100,000 gun owners had taken the Canadian Firearms Safety Course. Over the next five years millions will have to take it. Many long-time gun owners had not yet been touched by C-68, but as more and more of them discover personally what has been done, the level of opposition will rise. The implementation of Firearms Possession Permits, and universal registration will cause some to give up their guns, others to keep them illegally, fostering a black market (Thompson 1995), and still others to organize politically. Value conflicts are rarely resolved by legislation, but a successful attempt by one side to outlaw the other side can produce extreme responses when people feel the political system no longer works for them. One need only consider the Prohibition Era to see what repressive firearms legislation may produce.

Conclusions

Men are more likely to say they are familiar with the law, to actually "know" the law than women, and to discuss it more. People in Quebec are more likely to say they are not familiar with the law and do not discuss it frequently, but are more likely to know two or more aspects of the law than people in other regions of Canada. Older people say they are familiar with the law and discuss it frequently, but are less likely to "know" the law than younger people. Gun owners and those who are pro-hunting are more likely to say they are familiar with the law, to actually "know" the law, and to discuss the law than non-gun owners and those who oppose hunting.

Although we do not have a simple and clear measure of those who actively oppose firearms ownership (except from their values), there are a few relatively well informed people who think Canadians should not have the right to own firearms, and who discuss the topic among themselves frequently.

Overall Canadians are not particularly knowledgeable about or interested in firearms or gun control. The informed debate is taking place between a very small portion of the population who "know" the law and oppose firearms ownership, and a somewhat larger, but still small, portion who "know" the law and favour ownership.

Chapter 5. Canadians' Perceptions of Problems and Violent Crime

The Most Important Problem Facing Canada

When Canadians are asked in a public opinion survey what they think is the "most important problem facing Canada today," the typical response is something to do with the economy. This is unsurprising - the economy affects everyone.

Which aspect of the economy is considered most important varies depending on the recent focus of the media, and on the individual's situation. Sometimes "unemployment" is the most cited problem, sometimes "the recession." In early 1995 the most mentioned problem was "the deficit/government spending," which reflects intense coverage of the deficit and the promise of cutbacks. There is a certain tenuous link between reality and public opinion - if many people are unemployed, or a real recession is in progress, the answers are likely to reflect the situation.

Other persistent worries are crime and the environment. As these do not affect every individual every day, their saliency in a survey depends more on current media focus and, perhaps, isolated individual experiences. Thus, around the time of the Exxon Valdez accident, there were environmental disaster stories in the media on a daily basis, and the issue was frequently mentioned as a most important problem.

Crime, with few exceptions, does not vary much. In any given year, relatively few Canadians become victims of serious or violent crime. Unlike problems of the economy, which may directly trouble everyone, crime is experienced directly by a few victims and vicariously by many media consumers. Often, "crime waves" are a media creation. Sometimes, there will be a real crime wave in some small locality, usually occasioned by a small gang or an individual offender. Even a real crime wave is personally experienced by relatively few people. Rates of crime do change, relatively slowly, over the years, but media attention changes dramatically. A few unusual or brutal incidents may generate intense discussion of violent young people or paroled recidivists. As individuals only rarely experience crime personally, the level of worry tends to be directly related to the level of media attention.

Q1. In your opinion, what is the most important problem facing Canada today?		
Responses	Number	Percent
The Deficit/Government Spending	460	30.6
Unemployment/Job Creation	305	20.3
The Recession	18	1.2
The Economy	225	14.9
Crime/Violence	46	3.1
The Environment	14	.9
Education/Training	10	.7
Other	359	23.9
Don't Know	68	4.5
Total Responses	1,505	100.1

As the above table shows, two-thirds of the respondents were concerned about various aspects of the economy in early 1995, and only three percent thought crime was the most important problem. Some portion of that three percent may have been victims, or may know a victim personally. Crime is far from the most important problem perceived by Canadians. Only one person (out of 1,505) thought gun control was the most important problem.

People living in small towns and rural areas are least likely to see crime and violence as a problem (2%); people living in large cities (4%) are most likely to have this perception. Women (5%) are much more likely to perceive crime and violence as the most important problem than are men (2%). This may reflect personal experience with violence or media coverage that gives the impression that women are more likely to be crime victims than men.

Crime and violence are perceived to be the most important problem more by young people (4%) than by older people (2%). This may reflect reality to some extent, younger people are more likely to be crime victims, and some respondents may have been recently victimized. Four percent of respondents at all educational levels except university graduates see crime as the most important problem. Almost no university graduates gave this reply. Three percent of low income respondents, 4% of middle income respondents, but only 1% of high income

respondents saw crime as the most important problem. Those with "Right and Hunt" values are much less likely (1%) to see crime as the most important problem than those with "No Right No Hunt" values (5%).

Knowing two or more factual items about the current firearms law made no difference in seeing crime as the most important problem. Those who were not familiar with the law were much more likely (3%) than those who were familiar (0%) to see crime as the most important problem. Interestingly, those who discussed firearms and gun control "frequently" were more likely (5%) to see crime as the most important problem than those who discuss firearms and gun control less often (3%). If one were to ask Canadians if they think that crime and violence is a problem, many would say "yes," but when asked for their perception of the "most important" problem facing Canada, few think of it. It is a matter of attention and direction. Respondents may not have been thinking of crime, but when asked about it they will express an opinion.

Perceived Changes in Violent Crime

Some kinds of violent crime have increased over the last decade, some have diminished and some have fluctuated. Overall, based on statistics, the violent crime rate increased from 1984 to 1992, then decreased somewhat. Much of the increase was based on higher levels of reporting of minor assaults, which constitute 60% of "violent crime." If these minor assaults (Level 1) are removed the increase in the violent crime rate from 1985 to 1994 drops from 43% to 24% (Hendrick 1995:9). Gartner and Doob (1994) reported that the General Social Survey indicates no increase in the number of Canadians who were victims of crime between 1988-and 1993. People, however, do not live the average statistical experience. Some people have been victims; others have had friends or relatives victimized. Some people live in areas that have been terrorized by violent individuals, others have been frightened by media accounts of crime.

The media are faced with a dilemma - crime is news, statistics are not. If the other media are reporting a crime wave would people believe a news story that says it is not happening? Electronic media condenses space. A violent crime can be broadcast across Canada. A crime in downtown Toronto may seem close by, though a million people live between the viewer and the crime. A crime in the countryside may seem far away, though there are only a hundred thousand people between the viewer and the crime. Someone knifed in a bar fight may make the local news, but a child's murder is national news . Violent crime is heavily concentrated in the poorer classes, but is rarely reported; It is lightly concentrated in the richer classes, yet heavily reported when it does occur. A well-intentioned respect for individual privacy, and a laudable unwillingness to identify criminals by their backgrounds, leads to a situation in which the average Canadian can think that violent criminals are other average Canadians.

There is also the "golden age" myth. In the golden age children obeyed their parents, people admired and respected the police, everyone knew their place, and crime only occurred amongst the riffraff. Though its locus in time is uncertain, this halcyon era mostly seems to have occurred in the early adulthood of the recaller's parents. Greeks in the fifth century B.C. bemoaned the decline in respect of youth for their parents. Since the "golden age" everything has been going downhill. Crime, being ever reported, always seems to be worse than it used to be.

Many Canadian (45%) think that violent crime has increased a great deal in the last ten years, an additional 35% think it has increased somewhat. Among those who think that violent crime is the "most important" problem 62% think it has increased greatly, and a total of 89% think it has increased. One can dispute whether the changes in the violent crime rate constitute a "great" increase, "some" increase, or relative stability. Violent crime did go up, and recently has been going down. The belief that violent crime has increased has a reality of it's own; it is real in its consequences.

Q2. Would you say that violent crime has increased, decreased or stayed the same in Canada over the past ten years?		
Responses	Number	Percent
Increased a great deal	680	45.2
Increased somewhat	531	35.3
Stayed the same	193	12.8
Decreased somewhat	55	3.7
Decreased a great deal	1	.1
Don't know	45	3.0
Total Responses	1,505	100.0

Because the numbers are so small (only 4% think crime has decreased) the responses of all those who said "stayed the same," "decreased somewhat," "decreased a great deal," and, "Don't Know" have been condensed into a single category. The analysis will focus on those who think crime has increased a great deal.

Q2. Would you say that violent crime has increased, decreased or stayed the same in Canada over the past ten years? (Condensed Responses)		
Condensed Responses	Number	Percent
Increased a great deal	680	45.2
Increased somewhat	531	35.3
Stayed the same/Decreased/Don't Know	294	19.5
Total Responses	1,505	100.0

Ontario residents are most likely to think crime has increased a great deal (50%), those in the Atlantic (38%) and Prairie (39%) provinces are least likely to believe it. There is no difference in the perception from rural areas to large cities, but women are much (52%) more likely than men (38%) to think crime has increased a great deal. Older people (49%) are more likely than younger people (39%) to think crime has increased a great deal, perhaps comparing it to the golden age. University graduates are least likely (37%) to think crime has increased greatly, perhaps because they are more likely to read analytical news stories. Lower income people are slightly more likely (49%) than higher income people (41%) to think violent crime has increased greatly.

Gun owners (38%) are less likely than non-owners (46%) to think crime has increased greatly, perhaps because some have been sensitized to crime statistics by the gun control debate. There is no relationship between attitude toward hunting, or the right to own a firearm, and seeing a great increase in crime, though those most opposed to hunting are slightly more likely (perhaps because of the large number of women who hold these values) to perceive a great increase in violent crime. Knowledge of firearms laws and discussion of firearms are not significantly related to belief in a great increase in violent crime.

What Should Be Done About Reducing Violent Crime?

For the question "What do you think should be done about reducing violent crime?", a number of response categories were provided. Respondents could make six suggestions (the maximum number actually made was four). Responses that did not fit into one of the provided categories were recorded as "other." These included 158 total responses asking to bring back the death penalty - twice the number asking for stricter gun control laws, yet the issue has never been raised in Parliament. About half of the respondents suggested "other" solutions, or did not have any suggestions.

Q3. What do you think should be done about reducing violent crime? (Multiple Response)				
Responses	CATEGORY	Number	Percent of Responses	Percent of Cases
Increased Prison Sentences	Justice	338	18%	23%
Reduce/Eliminate Parole	Justice	63	3%	4%
Increased Police Services	Justice	66	4%	4%
Heavier Penalties to 2nd & 3rd Time Offenders	Justice	47	2%	3%
Stricter Gun Control Laws	Gun Control	75	4%	5%
Stricter Law for Gun Owners	Gun Control	12	1%	1%
Ban All Guns	Gun Control	7	0%	1%
Ban Certain Types of Guns	Gun Control	9	1%	1%
Reduce TV/Media Violence	Education-TV	81	4%	5%
Deport Non-Citizen Criminals	Justice	18	1%	1%
More Education	Education-TV	209	11%	14%
Other Responses	Other & DK	795	42%	53%
Don't Know	Other & DK	186	10%	12%
Total Responses		1,906	100.0%	126.7%

The most popular suggestion was "increased prison sentences" (338 total responses), followed by "more education" (209), followed by "reduce violence on television/media" (81), followed by "stricter gun control laws" (75).

This data had to be simplified for analysis. Individuals might make several suggestions for changes in the justice system, several suggestions for gun control, or suggestions for reducing media violence and increasing education. A fairly small number made suggestions in more than one of these categories. The answers were grouped into three categories. If the suggestion, or all the suggestions, of an individual fell into one category, as was usually true, the individual was assigned to that category. Four percent of the respondents made suggestions in two or three different categories, and almost half of the respondents made other suggestions, or did not know how to reduce violent crime.

Q3. What do you think should be done about reducing violent crime? (Categories)		
Condensed Responses in Categories	Number	Percent
Justice (Only) One or more of "Increased Prison Sentences", "Reduce/Eliminate Parole", "Increased Police Services", "Heavier 2nd & 3rd Time Offenders", and "Deport Non-Citizen Criminals".	420	27.9
Gun Control (Only) One or more of "Stricter Gun Control Laws", "Stricter Law for Gun Owners", "Ban All Guns", "Ban Certain Types of Guns".	55	3.7
Education-TV (Only) One or both of "More Education", "Reduce TV/Media Violence".	231	15.4
Responses in two or more of the above Categories	59	3.9
Other Responses and Don't Know	740	49.2
Total Responses	1,505	100.1

As the table shows, 28% of respondents, a majority of those with recorded opinions, favoured changes in the justice system. Increasing education and reducing violence on television appealed to 15%, while various forms of gun control attracted only 4% of the suggestions. Each of these figures would be slightly increased if the suggestions of those with responses in two or three categories (4%) were counted, but this would produce answers that totalled more than 100%. By condensing the responses this way, the appeal of various solutions can be examined.

Changes to the justice system are most favoured in the Prairie provinces (36%), least favoured in Quebec (15%). Gun control is most favoured in the Atlantic provinces (8%), least favoured in the prairies (2%) and Quebec (2%). Providing more education and reducing violence on television is strongly favoured in Quebec (29%), least so in BC and the Prairie provinces (8%). While Quebecers are strong supporters of gun control in other contexts, an "anti-media-violence" petition organized by a young girl in Quebec received much publicity and support, and this may have influenced this pattern of responses.

Community size has no significant impact on proposed solutions. Men are slightly more likely to suggest justice solutions, women slightly more likely to suggest gun control and education and television, but the differences are not significant. The age of the respondent has no consistent or significant effect on the suggestions made. Changes to the justice system are the most frequent suggestion made by people of all educational levels. Gun control is slightly more popular among university graduates (5%), and slightly less so among those with college and some university backgrounds (3%). The strongest effect of educational level is on the response to education and television items. Those with 1 to 12 years of education supported this option with 10% of their responses, while university graduates supported it with 20% of their responses. Higher income respondents are more likely to suggest changes in the justice system and reducing violence on TV than are lower income respondents.

Gun owners are strong supporters of justice options (35%), while non-gun owners support justice solutions at 26%. Non-gun owners are more likely to suggest gun control solutions (4%) than gun owners (1%). Non-gun owners are also more likely to support education and television suggestions (16%) than are gun owners (12%). There is no consistent or significant relationship between attitudes toward hunting, or the right to own a firearm, and the various crime control strategies. The respondents who did not know two or more factual items about the

current firearm legislation were somewhat more likely (4%) to suggest gun control solutions than those who did (1%). Familiarity and Discussion are not significantly related to proposed solutions.

Perceptions of Increased Violent Crime and Suggested Solutions

Suggestions for Reducing Violent Crime by Perceived Change in Violent Crime			
	Q2. Would you say that violent crime has increased, decreased or stayed the same in Canada over the past ten years?		
Q3. What do you think should be done about reducing violent crime (By Categories)	Great Increase	Some Increase	Stayed the Same, Decreased, DK
Justice - Prison, Parole, Police	29%	30%	21%
Gun Control - Any Mention	4%	2%	6%
More Education, Reduce Violent on TV	15%	14%	19%
Other Responses, No Responses	48%	51%	49%
Multiple Responses	4%	3%	5%
Total Number	680	531	294

The belief that crime has increased greatly has consequences for political debate. Those who think that crime has increased are more likely to call for changes in the justice system: longer prison sentences; reduced parole; increased police services - a logical reaction to a firmly held belief. They are about average in calling for more gun control. Those few respondents who believe crime has remained the same or decreased, are more favourable to reducing violence on television and more education, and slightly more favourable to gun control than are those who think crime has increased.

Conclusions

Only one Canadian out of twenty sees crime and violence as the major problem facing Canada, but four out of five think it has increased. Only one Canadian out of twenty spontaneously suggested more gun control measures to reduce violent crime; more than one out of four suggested changes to the justice system instead.

People in British Columbia and Ontario are more likely than people in the other provinces to see violent crime as the most important problem. People in Ontario are more likely to say crime has increased a great deal than are those in the other provinces. People in the Prairie provinces are the strongest supporters of changes to the justice system, while those in Quebec are the strongest supporters of more education and reduction of television and media violence. People in the Atlantic provinces were most likely to suggest gun control as a solution to violent crime; one out of thirteen did.

Women are more likely than men to think crime and violence is the most important problem, and to think it has become more common. This did not lead to any significant differences in proposed solutions; changes to the justice system were the most frequent suggestion of both sexes. Younger people were more likely to think crime and violence the most important problem, older people more likely to say it had increased greatly. People of all ages support changes to the justice system as the preferred solution to violent crime. Gun owners are more likely to suggest changes in the justice system than non-owners, though it is still the most popular option for non-gun owners. Not surprisingly, non gun-owners are more likely to support gun control than are gun owners.

Overall, Canadians are seven and a half times more likely to suggest changes to the justice system than they are to suggest changes to gun control laws. They are four times more likely to suggest more education and a reduction of television violence than they are to suggest changes to gun control laws. They are more than twice as likely to suggest a return to capital punishment than they are to suggest changes in the gun control laws. Changing gun control laws was not a valid response to what Canadians really want.

Chapter 6. Opinions on the Utility of Gun Control

One may safely assume that the Canadian public knows as little about the structure and dynamics of homicide, suicide, and accidents as they do about existing gun control legislation. As most do not know what the present law contains, it is hard to know what they mean when they call for stricter laws.

Ignorance of the facts of homicide, suicide and accidents is widespread. Even a widely quoted criminologist may make such errors as, "*When guns are used in the commission of criminal offenses, the most likely scenario is that a female victim will be killed in her home by a male she knows well*" (Boyd 1995:215)." Actually there were 7,371 firearm armed robberies in 1994 - the most frequent criminal offense involving firearms (Hendrick 1995:6). As for women being the most frequent victims, fewer than one in ten Canadian homicides fits Boyd's scenario. Boyd cited a Department of Justice publication as the source, without considering the data. Many Canadians have been so misled by government disinformation that they believe that women are more likely to be homicide victims than men. In fact, males are two times more likely to be homicide victims than women, and are almost two and a half times more likely to be murdered with a gun. Government handouts supporting gun control never stated that over 90 percent of Canadian firearms deaths (homicides, suicides, accidents) involve men, though the statistics are clear (Statistics Canada, Causes of Death).

The actual homicide figures, for the last eleven years, are:

Percent of Total Homicides, Canada 1984-1994; by cause of death, by gender.			
Source: Homicide Data Base, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics.			
Cause	Male	Female	Total
Shooting	23.0%	9.3%	32.2%
Stabbing	20.3%	8.8%	29.2%
Beating	13.0%	6.6%	19.6%
Strangulation	4.1%	6.9%	11.0%
Poisoning	0.2%	0.2%	0.4%
Smoke/Burns	1.8%	1.2%	3.0%
Other	2.2%	1.4%	3.6%
Unknown	0.2%	0.7%	0.9%
Total	64.9%	35.1%	100.0%
Total Numbers	4,663	2,522	7,185

Will Stricter Regulations Reduce Violent Crime?

Most of the respondents probably are unaware of these facts. They were asked hypothetical questions, which they answered on the basis of "common sense." When asked if stricter regulations of authorized firearms owners would lower the crime rate, quite reasonably, they respond that it would not.

Q10. If there were stricter regulations for authorized firearms owners, would you say that the violent crime rate would increase, decrease, or stay the same?		
Responses	Number	Percent
Increase a great deal	28	1.9
Increase Somewhat	60	4.0
Stay the Same	751	49.9
Decrease Somewhat	437	29.0
Decrease a Great Deal	171	11.4
Don't Know	58	3.8
Total Responses	1,505	100.0

To simplify the analysis, the six questions in this Chapter were condensed into two categories, "effective" and "ineffective" with the "Don't know" responses dropped. Thus, if a respondent answered that stricter regulations for authorized firearms owners would cause the violent crime rate to increase, or remain the same, the respondent was categorized as thinking this measure ineffective. If, on the other hand, the respondent replied that stricter regulations for authorized firearms owners would cause the violent crime rate to decrease, the respondent was categorized as thinking this measure effective. The "don't know" responses were dropped for this part of the

analysis, though they will be included in the Index of Effectiveness as "neutral" answers. Each of the six questions on effectiveness will be condensed following this pattern for the preliminary analysis.

Over half the respondents had an opinion, and 58%, say that stricter regulations for authorized firearms owners would not lower the violent crime rate. They are probably correct. Police only grant FACs to people without a criminal record. If stricter controls on people who have been checked by police does lowers the violent crime rate, then there are serious question as to whether the police have been doing their job, or more fundamentally, whether past behaviour is of any use in predicting future behaviour. Those who say that stricter regulations for authorized firearms owners would decrease the violent crime rate reflect the government's position. It is important to remember that the vast majority of the respondents in this survey did not know what was necessary to become an authorized firearms owner, so the minority who believe stricter regulations will reduce crime may be assuming that anything "stricter" will be effective.

Only in Quebec do a majority (55%) think stricter regulations for authorized firearms owners will reduce violent crime. In all the other regions of Canada, 63% think otherwise. People in large cities, who have the least experience of firearms, are more likely to believe that additional regulations would reduce crime. Two thirds of men (66%) think more regulations would be ineffective, but 50% of women think they would reduce violent crime. Respondents of all age groups, all educational levels and all income levels, thought stricter regulations would be ineffective.

A majority of non-gun owners (52%), and 84% of gun owners, think stricter regulations for authorized gun owners would be ineffective in reducing violent crime. Among those who have "Right and Hunt" values 72% think regulations would be ineffective, while 58% of those with opposite values think they would be effective. Knowledge of two or more factual items of law makes no significant difference in opinions. Of those who spontaneously mentioned "gun control" of some type as a way of reducing crime, 64% think that stricter regulations for owners would reduce violent crime.

Does Gun Control Affect Criminals?

The respondents were next asked, "Do you agree or disagree that gun control laws affect only law-abiding citizens as criminals will always be able to get firearms?" Those who agreed that gun control only affected the law-abiding were coded as indicating that gun control was ineffective in this circumstance. If they disagreed, they were coded as indicating that they thought gun control was effective. There is a bit of a tautology here, by definition the law-abiding obey laws, criminals do not. Yet there is always the possibility that a sufficiently authoritarian gun control system just might reduce the criminal acquisition of firearms.

Q11.1 Do you agree or disagree that Gun Control laws affect only law-abiding citizens as criminals will always be able to get firearms?		
Responses	Number	Percent
Agree Strongly	778	51.7
Agree Somewhat	374	24.8
Disagree Somewhat	194	12.9
Disagree Strongly	117	7.8
Don't Know	42	2.8
Total Responses	1,505	100.0

A great majority of Canadians think that criminals will be able to get guns in spite of restrictive laws. Over 80% of those in Quebec and the Prairie provinces think gun control laws will be ineffective in keeping arms from criminals, and 74% of those in the Atlantic provinces agreed. In rural areas 82% think it will be ineffective, while in large cities 76% think so too. Men (81%) are slightly more likely to think gun control ineffective than women (76%). University graduates are the least likely to think gun control ineffective, only 70% do, while those of all other educational backgrounds are more likely to think it ineffective (over 80%).

Over 90% of gun owners think gun control ineffective in keeping guns out of the hands of criminals, and 76% of non-gun owners also think it ineffective. Among those with "Right and Hunt" values 87% think criminals will be able to get firearms, and 69% of those with "No Right No Hunt" values also think this. Even among those who spontaneously mentioned some kind of "gun control" as a way of reducing violent crime 71% think that criminals will be able to get guns.

Clearly most Canadians do not think gun control will keep guns out of the hands of criminals.

Will Gun Control Reduce Violence Against Women?

The rampage of Marc Lepine in December of 1989, at Ecole Polytechnique was a defining moment in Canadian gun control. Fourteen women were murdered, and gun control came to be defined for some as a means of reducing violence against women. Shooting deaths of women account for less than ten percent of the homicides in Canada, but the symbolism of male violence transcends the statistics. The Minister of Justice frequently says that women are being killed in their homes by legal firearms - although police rarely check if the murder instrument was legally owned or not. (Dansys Consultants, 1992: "*Respondents were asked if the accused was violating any laws, regulations, or court orders by possessing a firearm. ... In over three-quarters of the cases the police responded that they had no knowledge of any gun violation.*" p. 26.). But, does the Canadian public accept the recurring theme that stricter gun control will greatly reduce the level of violence against women in Canada?

Q11.2. Do you agree or disagree that stricter gun control would greatly reduce the level of violence against women in Canada?		
Responses	Number	Percent
Agree Strongly	302	20.1
Agree Somewhat	358	23.8
Disagree Somewhat	336	22.3
Disagree Strongly	434	28.8
Don't Know	75	5.0
Total Responses	1,505	100.0

Over half of the respondents with an opinion (54%) do not think stricter gun control would be effective in reducing the level of violence against women in Canada. The only province in which the majority (59%) think otherwise is Quebec, perhaps reflecting the trauma of the Lepine rampage. Men (64%) think it would be ineffective, while women (56%) think it would be effective. A majority of all age groups think it would be ineffective. People of most educational levels think it would be ineffective, though a slight majority of those who have less than high school graduation (52%) think it would be effective. Fifty-five percent of those in the lowest income group think it would be effective, while a majority of those with medium to high incomes think it would be ineffective.

Among gun owners 79% think it would be ineffective, but 52% of non-gun owners think it would be effective. Among those with "Right and Hunt" values two-thirds think it would be ineffective, while 57% of those with opposite values think it would be effective. Eighty-one percent of those who say they are "very familiar" with the current law think it would be ineffective, and 70% of those who discuss firearms and gun control frequently think likewise. Among those who spontaneously mentioned "gun control" as a means of reducing violent crime, 59% thought it would be effective.

Given the small number of gun-homicides of women in Canada, (about 60 a year) and the estimated eight million guns in Canada, it is hard to see how any form of "gun control" can significantly reduce these deaths. Men apparently have no difficulty in strangling, knifing, or beating women to death if no firearm is present. If all guns were to magically disappear it is doubtful that many endangered women would be saved. Reality aside, 46% of the respondents think, or want to believe, that stricter gun control would greatly reduce violence against women in Canada.

Suicides, Homicides and Accidental Deaths

Of the 1,400 or so firearms deaths a year in Canada, about 1,100 are suicides - about one third of all suicides. There is convincing evidence that in places where firearms are hard to get people are less likely to kill themselves with firearms, but there is also convincing evidence that a lack of firearms has little or no effect on the suicide rate (Rich 1990; Moyer and Carrington 1992). In Japan, where there are very few firearms the suicide rate is higher than it is in Canada. In the United States where about two thirds of suicides are committed with firearms, the overall suicide rate is lower than it is in Canada. About two-thirds of Canadians who commit suicide figure out how to do it without a firearm. Those who commit suicide with a firearm generally intend to kill themselves, it is a remarkable stretch to assume that they incapable of selecting the equally sudden and lethal methods that have occurred to many of the other suicides. Respondents in this survey reflect this sceptical attitude, a majority thinking that stricter regulations would be ineffective in reducing suicide rates.

Q14.1 How effective do you think stricter regulations would be in reducing suicides? Would you say		
Responses	Number	Percent
Very effective	202	13.4
Somewhat effective	458	30.4
Not very effective	362	24.1
Not at all effective	428	28.5
Don't know	55	3.6
Total Responses	1,505	100.0

In every region of Canada, bar Quebec, a majority thinks stricter regulations would be ineffective in reducing suicide. In Quebec 52% think otherwise. Men are particularly likely to think it ineffective, 63% do, but 53% of women think it would be effective. (Incidentally, most suicides are male) Some 51% of younger people think it would be effective, but middle aged (59%) and older people (56%) disagree. In general the more education one has, the less likely one is to think that stricter gun regulations can reduce suicide but a majority at every educational level think it would be ineffective. Fifty-one percent of those in the lowest income group think it would be effective, but those with medium and higher incomes think it would be ineffective. A slight majority of non-gun owners (51%) think it would be effective, but 78% of gun owners think it would be ineffective.

Two-thirds of those with "Right and Hunt" values think it would not reduce suicides, while 61% of those with "No Right No Hunt" values think it would be effective. Three-quarters of those who say they are "very familiar" with the current law, and two-thirds of those who discuss firearms and gun control "frequently" think it would be ineffective. Those who spontaneously mentioned "gun control" as a way to reduce violent crime are not significantly more likely than those who did not mention it to think that it will reduce suicide.

It seems that only those who know little or nothing about guns, or who oppose guns and hunting on principle, think a suicide can be prevented by gun control.

A substantial majority of respondents believe stricter regulations will reduce homicide. But there is a curious contradiction. In the same interview, one third of the sample responds that stricter gun control will not be effective in reducing violent crime, but will be effective in reducing homicide. In fact there is no convincing evidence that any form of gun control reduces homicide, anywhere.

Q14.1 How effective do you think stricter regulations would be in reducing homicides? Would you say		
Responses	Number	Percent
Very effective	325	21.6
Somewhat effective	697	46.3
Not very effective	243	16.1
Not at all effective	193	12.8
Don't know	47	3.1
Total responses	1,505	99.9

Overall, 70% of respondents think stricter gun control will be effective in reducing homicides. Quebecois, as with other items, are most optimistic (77%) while the Prairie provinces (59%) are least. People living in large cities (74%) are more likely to think it effective than people in rural areas (61%). Women, perhaps impressed by the argument that registration will allow the police to seize guns in domestic disputes, are much more likely (76%) than men (64%) to think it effective. Younger people (76%) are considerably more likely than older people (63%) to think gun control will reduce homicide. Education levels do not make much difference, though university graduates are more convinced (74%) than the average. Higher income respondents are less likely to think stricter gun control will reduce homicide.

Gun owners are 56% unlikely to think it will work, while a majority of non-gun owners (77%) think it will. Among those with the "Right and Hunt" value orientation 56% think stricter regulations will reduce homicide, among those with "No Right No Hunt" values, 86% think stricter regulations will reduce homicide. Among those

who said they were "very familiar" with the current law 62% thought stricter regulations would be ineffective, while 73% of those less familiar with the current law thought stricter regulations would reduce homicide. Among the 6% of respondents who spontaneously mentioned that "gun control" would reduce violent crime, 91% think that stricter regulations will reduce homicide.

As was true with suicides, those with the least exposure to firearms, and the least familiarity with the present law, are most likely to think homicides can be reduced by stricter gun control.

Over the past decade, there were sixty to seventy fatal gun accidents a year in Canada. That some portion of these, perhaps 5 to 10, are disguised suicides is indisputable. The young and the reckless are over-represented in almost all causes of accidental death, including those with firearms. Even without the compulsory federal safety course the vast majority of firearms owners are careful - it is their own skin they are protecting. It is unreasonable to expect that stricter regulations will greatly reduce the accident rate. Among those who have no idea what the accident rate is (people are often stunned when they discover how few accidents there really are) the belief that many lives will be saved by stricter regulations takes on an importance quite disproportionate to probability.

Q14.1 How effective do you think stricter regulations would be in reducing accidents? Would you say		
Responses	Number	Percent
Very effective	440	29.2
Somewhat effective	669	44.4
Not very effective	185	12.3
Not at all effective	149	9.9
Don't Know	62	4.1
Total Responses	1,505	99.9

Overall, of those who had opinions, 77% think stricter regulations would be effective in reducing accidents, while 23% do not. People in the Atlantic provinces (80%) and Quebec (80%) are most likely to think it would be effective, while those in the Prairie provinces (71%) are the least. People in large cities (80%) are the most likely to think it effective, while people in rural areas (70%) are the least. Women are much more likely to think stricter gun control will reduce accidents (84%) than men (69%). Younger people are much more optimistic (83%) than older people (72%). There is no significant difference between educational levels, and the difference between them and lower income respondents is not significant.

Non-gun owners (82%) are much more likely to think stricter regulations would reduce accidents than gun owners (53%). Among those who have "Right and Hunt" values 63% think stricter regulations will be effective in reducing accidents, while 88% of those who have "No Right No Hunt" attitudes hold this opinion. As with the other anticipated benefits of stricter regulations, those who have had some personal experience with firearms are more sceptical of the possible benefits than those who have not.

Index of Perceived Effectiveness of Gun Control

Rather than trying to summarize the results of six the different questions in this chapter, they were combined into a single index. A correlation matrix was created, every question against every other. All correlations were positive and significant, indicating that all of the individual questions were measuring the same underlying dimension, the perceived effectiveness of stricter gun control. Then, for each question, a score of -2 was assigned to a "very ineffective" response; -1 to "ineffective;" 0 to "stay the same," or "Don't know;" a +1 to an "effective" response; and a +2 to a response of "very effective." This resulted in a 25 point scale that was collapsed into three categories, "ineffective," "neutral," and "effective." This scale provides a summary of the respondents' views on the effectiveness of gun control, and eliminates some of the idiosyncracies of individual questions.

Index of the six questions on the Effectiveness of Gun Control			
Value	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
-12.00	4	.3	.3

-11.00	5	.3	.6	
-10.00	41	2.7	3.4	
-9.00	35	2.3	5.7	
-8.00	43	2.8	8.5	INEFFECTIVE
-7.00	66	4.4	12.9	
-6.00	65	4.3	17.2	
-5.00	75	5.0	22.2	
-4.00	69	4.6	26.8	
-3.00	82	5.5	32.3	
-2.00	87	5.8	38.0	
-1.00	85	5.7	43.7	
0.00	83	5.5	49.2	NEUTRAL
1.00	114	7.6	56.7	
2.00	100	6.7	63.4	
3.00	86	5.7	69.1	
4.00	107	7.1	76.2	
5.00	89	5.9	82.1	
6.00	75	5.0	87.1	
7.00	67	4.4	91.6	
8.00	54	3.6	95.2	EFFECTIVE
9.00	29	1.9	97.1	
10.00	19	1.3	98.4	
11.00	17	1.1	99.5	
12.00	8	.5	100.0	
Total	1,505	100.0	100.0	

This scale was then grouped into three categories. The new groups were chosen to regroup as closely as possible into the bottom and top quartiles, with about half the respondents in the middle.

	Frequency	Percent
INEFFECTIVE	403	26.8
NEUTRAL	637	42.3
EFFECTIVE	465	30.9
Total	1,505	100.0

Overall, Quebecois, at 39%, were most likely to perceive gun control as being effective, people in the Prairie provinces the most likely to perceive it as ineffective (34%). This difference between Quebec and the Rest of Canada was significant. People in big cities were most likely to perceive "gun control" as being effective, people in small towns the most likely to perceive it as being ineffective. Women were most likely to perceive it as effective, men most likely to think otherwise. Younger people were more likely to be neutral rather than say it was ineffective, but there is little difference in views on effectiveness by age. There were no significant differences in views on effectiveness or ineffectiveness by educational level. The higher the respondent's income the more likely he or she was to perceive "gun control" as ineffective.

Sixty-one percent of gun owners considered gun control to be ineffective, while non-gun owners were most likely to be neutral (45%) or to think it effective (36%). For those with "Right and Hunt" values 45% perceived "gun control" as ineffective, while among those with "No Right No Hunt" values only 10% perceived it to be ineffective. People who favour hunting think stricter regulations will be ineffective, while people who oppose hunting think they will be effective.

Basic Values and Perceptions of Effectiveness

Perceptions of the Effectiveness of Gun Control by Basic Value Orientation			
Index of Perceived Effectiveness of Stricter Gun Control	Right to Own and Attitude Toward Hunting Typology		
	Right and Hunt	Mixed	No Right, No Hunt
Is Not Effective	45%	21%	10%
Neutral	39%	44%	43%

Is Effective	16%	34%	47%
Total Percent	100%	99%*	100%
Total Responses	529	609	368

Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

As the above table shows, the effect of basic values on perceptions of effectiveness is very strong. This was confirmed in a multiple regression analysis which indicated that the basic values were the most important determinants of the respondent's perceptions of the effectiveness of stricter gun control. Gun ownership, residence in Quebec, gender, being "very familiar" with the current law, and spontaneously mentioning gun control as a means of reducing violent crime, also had an influence, but the respondent's basic values were the most important influence.

The opinions people express about legislative proposals appear to be rational, in most cases, because they believe that they will be effective. What this analysis has demonstrated is that assumptions of effectiveness are largely determined by basic value assumptions, rather than a result of a dispassionate analysis of evidence.

Conclusions

In many ways, the question of the effectiveness of stricter gun control is not a question of fact, but of overall attitudes. Most Canadians do not know what the present law is; have little idea of the realities of homicide, suicide and firearms accidents. In such a situation, responses largely reflect their underlying orientations and their place in the attendant philosophical conflict.

Chapter 7. Registration of Firearms

An official record containing the purchaser's name, address, and Firearms Acquisition Certificate number is kept for all firearm sales by licensed dealers in Canada. All restricted firearm transfers must be registered. Sales, gifts and loans of non-restricted firearms (mostly rifles and shotguns) among individuals are not registered.

Parliament has now mandated universal registration in C-68. Various rationales for registration were advanced: it will make owners more responsible; will encourage them to store their firearms safely; registration will allow the police to enforce prohibition orders, taking guns from dangerous individuals; registration will let the police know what they face in hostage taking situations. Analogies have been offered: cars, dogs, and trees (in Toronto) are registered, so why not guns? Proponents of registration did not claim that registration will affect the criminal use of guns, except in domestic situations, but expressed the hope that it will reduce suicides and accidents.

If all firearms in Canada were actually registered, (although compliance is unlikely to top 60%) there might be some instances in which police would find the data useful. Compliance, however, is likely to be at a low level overall, and at a still lower level among the most troublesome members of Canadian society. All analogies are imperfect, but cars, dogs and trees are all large objects exposed to public view. Failure to register them is neither a Criminal Code offense, nor subject to a ten year prison sentence.

Firearms are relatively small objects which, legally, have to be hidden from public view most of the time. At home, regulations require that they be locked away out of sight. When they are being transported, they must be locked and concealed from public view. When they are in use, they are either in isolated fields or woods, or within the confines of a shooting club. It is rare that the police will be able to check firearm registrations, except in homes, cars and clubs, and only then if they intentionally decide to do so. The licence plate on a car is considerably larger than almost all handguns. Dogs wear their licences around their necks. Trees do not move around much. It is fairly easy and unintrusive to check to see if these large objects are registered. Moreover, prominent government officials have not been heard to remark that nobody in Canada needs cars, dogs or trees.

In some ways a more apt analogy would be a requirement to register jewellery. Diamond rings are small, high-value objects that can be concealed easily, though they are sometimes worn in public. Imagine the success registration of jewellery would have if the government first seized diamonds over one carat, then banned diamonds under one half carat except for people who already owned one, then proposed registering all jewellery, reserving the right to prohibit any unreasonably ostentatious types, while saying, "We do not want to take your wedding rings, but no one really needs jewellery." One would reasonably expect that universal jewellery registration would be less than completely successful, even with draconian enforcement. Universal registration of firearms will be just as problematic as this hypothetical registration of jewellery.

Registration

In all public opinion research, a distinction must be made between mass opinion and public judgement. In an abstract way almost everyone agrees that poverty should be reduced. On the other hand, no one likes paying the heavy taxes that support a generous social welfare system. Most people realize that public issues always involve trade-offs. This is also true with registering firearms. A good idea is not quite so good when one realizes that it will cost a fair amount of money and tie up a number of police officers in paperwork (Wade and Tennuci 1994).

Numerous surveys funded by the Coalition for Gun Control and the Department of Justice have found that over 80% (86% in the Coalition for Gun Control study conducted by Reid in September, 1993 and 86% in this January, 1995, survey) of Canadians support universal firearms registration. These studies are accurate reflections of the response to the abstract question, but they reflect "mass opinion" rather than "public judgement."

To determine the real support for registration, six questions were asked. First, "Do you agree or disagree that all firearms should be registered?" This is essentially the same question the Justice Department cited to show public support for registration. Then five further questions were asked of those who agreed with registration, in the general form, "If ... would you still (agree strongly or somewhat) that all firearms should be registered." This wording was perhaps not as felicitous as it might have been. It tends to encourage a "response set," wherein the respondent continues to "agree" to avoid cognitive dissonance with the first response - as if he or she had considered all the complexities when answering the first question. Thus these questions are likely to over-estimate support for registration. If people had been asked to consider the costs or trade-offs in the first question, overall support might well have been lower.

The Six Questions on Universal Registration of Firearms

- 11.3 Do you agree or disagree that all firearms should be registered? IF 11.3 (AGREE STRONGLY OR SOMEWHAT TO ALL FIREARMS SHOULD BE REGISTERED), ASK:
- 12.1 If it would cost \$100 million over the next five years to set up and maintain a firearms registry, would you still (AGREE STRONGLY OR SOMEWHAT) that all firearms should be registered?
- 12.2 If it would cost \$500 million, would you still (AGREE STRONGLY OR SOMEWHAT) that all firearms should be registered?
- 12.3 If you knew that it would increase your taxes, would you still (AGREE STRONGLY OR SOMEWHAT) that all firearms should be registered?
- 12.4 If you knew the police were opposed to registration, would you still (AGREE STRONGLY OR SOMEWHAT) that all firearms should be registered?
- 12.5 If registration would force the police to pull constables off the street in order to deal with the paperwork involved, would you still (AGREE STRONGLY OR SOMEWHAT) that all firearms should be registered?

Responses	11.3	12.1	12.2	12.3	12.4	12.5
Agree Strongly	75.7	47.4	32.4	29.8	49.5	27.3
Agree Somewhat	9.9	16.5	17.5	20.8	16.3	16.0
Disagree Somewhat	4.9	8.4	12.5	18.8	8.3	17.9
Disagree Strongly	7.3	9.5	17.3	12.7	5.3	18.3
Don't Know	2.1	3.8	5.9	3.6	6.3	6.2
Total Percent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total Responses	1,505	1,505	1,505	1,505	1,505	1,505

Support for universal firearm registration declined in every situation where costs or trade-offs had to be considered. The greater the cost or reduction in public services, the less the support. The respondents may not have been ready for the question. "If you knew the police were opposed ... ," because the support of the Association of Chiefs of Police had been in the headlines, and the Chiefs steadfastly resisted efforts to survey working police officers. Several surveys taken during the summer and fall of 1995 indicated that police officers' support for registration is far from universal.

If it were possible in a public opinion poll to consider combinations of options, such as the cost being \$500 million (a low overall estimate), and necessary attendant reductions in policing, support would probably fall further, among those willing to make a "public judgement." There are, in essence, three opinions being expressed by our respondents. The first is opposition to registration; the second is support or opposition to registration depending on the cost or other trade-offs; the third (which, in some cases, may reflect a "response set"), support for registration regardless of the cost or whatever else is involved.

Index of Attitudes Towards Universal Registration: Number of registration questions in which the respondent agrees with registration.			
Responses	CATEGORY	Number	Percent
Does not agree with registration	NONE	215	14.3
Agrees with one to five questions	SOFT	919	61.1
Agrees with all six questions	HARD	370	24.6
Total Responses		1,505	100.0

The first category, "none," are those who did not agree or did not have an opinion on universal registration. The second category, "soft," are those who agreed in the abstract, but disagreed in one or more of the "trade-off" scenarios. The third category, "hard," are those who support registration in every instance without regard to cost or public-safety trade-offs. The "none" are highest in the Prairie provinces (28%), the "hard" highest in Quebec (31%). Interestingly, Quebec also has the highest number of "soft" responses (65%). Rural regions had the highest level of "none" responses (25%), and large cities had the highest level of "hard" responses (26%). Interestingly, almost two thirds (64%) of those in small and medium sized cities, and large cities, had "soft" responses.

Men were highest in the "none" category (20%), women highest in the "hard" category (29%). Both were roughly equal in the "soft" category. The oldest age group was least likely to accept registration ("none," 23%), the youngest most likely ("hard," 30%), but the young were also most open to public judgement ("soft," 63%). People

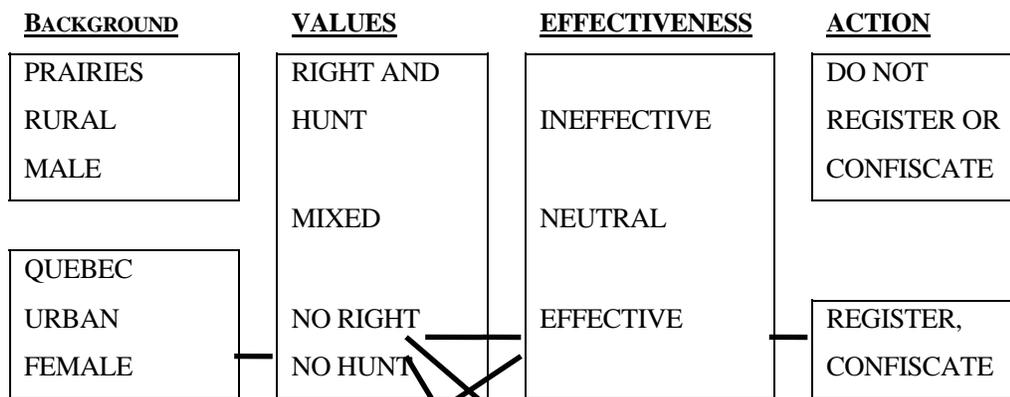
with the lowest level of education were most likely to reject registration ("none" 21%), while high school graduates were the most likely to accept it under any circumstances ("hard" 28%). Increasing levels of education lead to increasing willingness to consider trade-offs ("soft"), 57% for those with less than high school, to 65% for university graduates. People in the lowest income group were most likely to be "hard" (37%), while people in the highest income group were most likely to reject registration, "none," (15%).

Gun owners had the highest level of rejection of registration ("none" 47%), while non-gun owners had the highest level of complete acceptance ("hard" 28%). Interestingly, non-gun owners were also the most open to considerations of trade-offs ("soft" 65%). The intransigence of many gun owners toward registration will be considered later in this chapter.

Those who hold "Right and Hunt" values are most likely to reject registration (29%), while those who hold "No Right No Hunt" values are the most likely to support it ("hard" 36%). Knowing two or more factual items of the law is not significantly related to attitudes on registration. Those who say they are "very familiar" with the current law are most likely to reject registration (42%), while those who are less familiar are just average ("hard" 25%) in their support. A similar pattern is found with those who discuss firearms and gun control "frequently" being the most opposed to registration ("none" 35%), while those who discuss the topic less frequently are just average. Those who spontaneously mentioned some type of "gun control" as a method of reducing violent crime are very likely to support registration under all circumstances ("hard" 36%).

The "Values, Effectiveness and 'Hard' Support for Registration" graphic gives another way of looking at this relationship. Respondents with "No Right No Hunt" values support registration at any cost whether or not they believe gun control will be effective. Perhaps they see registration as a first step towards eliminating all guns. On the other hand, if a respondent who does not have anti-gun and hunting values thinks that stricter gun control is ineffective, then they tend to oppose universal registration ("none" 35%).

Values Effectiveness, and Support for Registration



In general, those who think gun control effective are more likely than those who think it is ineffective to support universal registration. There are, however, some people who favour registration and confiscation whether or not they think gun control is effective. The path diagram shows an outline of this relationship.



Basic Values	Attitude on Registration	Perceived Effectiveness of Stricter Gun Control			
		Not Effective	Neutral	Is Effective	Total Percent
Right and Hunt	NONE	49%	16%	5%	29%
	SOFT	45%	65%	66%	56%
	HARD	6%	20%	29%	15%
	Col%	100%	*101%	100%	100%
	Row%	45%	39%	16%	100%
	n =	237	209	83	529
Mixed	NONE	19%	7%	2%	8%
	SOFT	70%	69%	58%	66%
	HARD	12%	23%	40%	26%
	Col%	*101%	*99%	100%	100%
	Row%	21%	45%	34%	100%
	n =	129	271	209	609
No Right, No Hunt	NONE	5%	4%	2%	3%
	SOFT	73%	58%	61%	61%
	HARD	22%	38%	37%	36%
	Col %	100%	100%	100%	100%
	Row %	10%	43%	47%	100%
	n =	37	157	174	368
Total	Row %	27%	42%	31%	100%

Overall, support and opposition to universal firearms registration is a reflection of individual values. Those who would like to see a Canada without guns support registration regardless of whether they really believe it will be effective, and regardless of the cost. The majority, who are not ideologues, are more concerned with costs and trade-offs. Those who support the right to own firearms, or favour hunting or are gun-owners, are least likely to support registration, though many of them would do so if they thought that it would provide worthwhile results.

Compliance with Registration

For universal firearm registration to provide any benefits beyond harassing gun-owners, there must be a high level of compliance. If there is not, the police will not be able to use the data with any certainty. They cannot inspect gun owners for compliance with storage regulations, or be notified of the theft of unregistered firearms. Without nearly absolute compliance, millions of guns can and will be sold on the grey (not registered, for non-criminal use) or black (not registered, for criminal use) markets. The government has already confiscated various kinds of registered firearms on at least five occasions between 1978 and 1995. Only irretrievably naive and hopelessly optimistic gun owners believe that they are not vulnerable now that the Federal government has the right to prohibit any firearm thought to be not "reasonable" for hunting and sporting purposes.

When the survey was administered in January 1995, details of the registration system had not been tabled in Parliament. Many gun-owners were willing to go along, in principle, since the Minister of Justice had assured them that it was going to be inexpensive and as easy as mailing in a postcard. After the legislation was actually tabled, it became clear that it was not to be so simple. Every hunting trip to the U.S. will require the exporting and re-importing of each firearm. Anyone found without their registration card can be charged with an offense. Failure to register can bring a ten year sentence. Short barrel and small calibre pistols are to be prohibited. A semi-automatic hunting rifle widely used for varmint shooting is to be prohibited. A semi-automatic rifle used in every "military" match in Canada is to be prohibited - these were run under the aegis of Rifle Associations which had a century-long partnership with the military in encouraging marksmanship. The costs are still not known, but it will hit either taxpayers or gun owners (probably both) for a great deal of money. As the gun owners who were not involved in the debate become aware of what is involved, opposition appears to be growing.

The question asked in January 1995 has to be considered very general. Now that some details are known, non-compliance may become far more likely.

Gun owners are generally law-abiding. Since 1978 all legal owners have all been checked out by the police before being granted a FAC. Some, however, are a higher risk than others. If the low risk people register in great numbers, and the higher risk people do not register (as is certainly likely), the registration records will be relatively useless - an experience Canada has had twice before with firearms legislation. The first was an effort in the 1920s to register firearms purchases by "aliens", and the second was an attempted universal registration during the Second World War.

Gun-owning respondents were asked, "If the government's proposal to register all firearms becomes law, do you plan on registering all, some, or none of your firearms?" For registration to be effective, the only acceptable answer is "all."

Q.18. If the government's proposal to register all firearms becomes law, do you plan on registering all, some, or none of your firearms?			
Responses	Are there firearms of any kind in your home or garage?	Do any of these firearms belong to you personally?	
	Yes %	In home, don't own%	Owner %
Register All	76.7	83.6	72.5
Register Some	4.7	2.7	5.9
Register None	11.7	3.9	16.2
Don't Know	6.9	9.6	5.4
Total Percent	100.0	99.8	100.0
Total Responses	346	127	219

The above table distinguishes between actual gun owners and those who live in a home where there is a gun they do not own. In all the other analytical tables, the non-gun owning resident of a gun owning home falls between the non-gun owner and the gun owner in terms of attitudes. The Coalition for Gun Control exploited this difference in their press release of September 30, 1993, where they claimed that 53% of gun owners strongly supported registration. To get this figure Angus Reid categorized everyone in a gun owning household as a gun owner - a bit like categorizing a man who lives in a house with a woman as a woman. As the table shows, the non-gun owning member of a gun owning household is more likely to say they will register all the guns, or to say they "don't know".

While the non-gun owning member of the household may have an influence on the decision to register, the gun owner is the primary decision maker. In analyzing compliance, however, one should deal only with the responses of gun owners themselves.

Propensity to register varies widely by region, with 86% of Quebecois and only 58% of prairie gun owners saying they would register all their guns. There is no significant difference in willingness to register in rural or urban areas, or among gun owners in different age groups. Among the small number of women who admitted gun ownership, only 41% said they would register all their guns, while 75% of men said they would register all their guns. University graduates, surely a low risk educational category, were most likely to say they would register their guns (84%).

People who keep guns for self defense are least likely to register all their guns (48%), followed by those who keep guns for predator control (67%), collecting (67%), hunting (73%), and target shooting (92%). Handgun target shooters, of course, are already registered. Among those few gun owners (14) who feel strongly that Canadians should not have a right to own a gun, 100% say they will register all their guns.

The more different types of firearms (rifles, shotguns, pistols) a person owns the less likely he or she is to say they will register all of them. This would seem to suggest that the total number of firearms which will be registered will be even less than one would estimate from a compliance rate of three-quarters of owners.

Percent of Gun Owners who will register all their firearms, buy number of different types of guns (rifles, pistols, shotguns) they own.			
Responses	Number of Types		
	One	Two	Three
Register All	81%	70%	62%
Total Responses	72	121	21

People who own several types of firearms are obviously more involved with firearms than people who own just one type. The sixty-two percent compliance rate among these owners is considerably below the average.

The argument has been made that before domestic conflict arises, the participants are law abiding and will register their guns. But, "*Husbands who kill their wives typically have criminal records and/or substance abuse problems and/or are experiencing economic difficulties. They have a history of violent disputes with their wives that has not been made known to the police.* (Dansys p.47)" That many in this situation will register their firearms seems unlikely, because only 41% of persons in common law unions said they would register their guns. Note that common law unions feature a rate of uxoricide eight times higher and a rate of slain husbands 15 times that of registered unions (Wilson and Daly, p. 9). Also, single people, who account for 45% of those accused of homicide (Fedorowycz 1994:15), are significantly less likely (60%) than the average (73%) to say they will register all their guns. Thus, the people who are more likely to misuse guns are those who are least likely to register them.

These responses came before any details of the registration system were known. They indicate that the system will fail to have any significant impact on firearm homicides (criminals will not register, nor will many of the high risk households). However, it will create close to a million outlaws, most of whom have never before done anything illegal in their lives and should send millions of guns into the grey and black markets. In the meantime, police will be spending considerable effort registering the guns of law-abiding citizens.

Conclusions

The values driving the registration debate are deeply felt, but not often discussed. For some who support universal registration it is only a step toward the elimination of all firearms, for others, it is a policy they believe will produce benefits, worthwhile as long as the costs are not too high. Those who oppose registration often see the costs, which they will likely wind up paying, as greater than the benefits. It is important to realize that the depth of feeling, while great at both extremes, is more personal for the gun owner. Public opinion may support building a new highway, but the opposition from people who will forfeit their homes to it will be tenacious, long lasting, and divisive.

The strongest proponents of registration are those who think Canadians should not have a right to own a firearm. For many of them matters of cost and trade-offs are irrelevant. Whether or not it will be effective is irrelevant. They feel it to be a moral decision, something like the prohibition of alcohol used to be. They rarely have a personal stake in the law. It is not their property which will be prohibited, and it will not produce any direct benefit to them in most cases. They will probably not be completely satisfied so long as any Canadian is still allowed to own a gun.

The reasons some gun owners are reluctant to register are not hard to understand. Many farmers have an old Lee-Enfield rifle, worth about \$60. They may not want to pay \$60 every five years for a possession licence, plus registration fees, to register their \$60 rifle. Others, perhaps including a fair number of women, do not want anyone to know they possess a firearm for self-defense. Many others are concerned that their firearms will ultimately become prohibited, and then confiscated.

It is also unreasonable, in the view of gun owners, to expect any great number of real crimes to be solved, or weapons to be usefully traced because of registration. Instead, gun owners expect a host of technical charges to be laid against those among them who do not follow an extremely complex law to the letter.

It is safe to predict that passage of C-68 is not the end of the conflict, but the beginning of a wider conflict between government and some of its heretofore most compulsively law-abiding citizens.

Chapter 8. Confiscation of Handguns

If Canada was separated from Earth by millions of miles that could only be traversed with great difficulty and expense, banning handguns might make sense. As Canada shares a long and open border with the United States, where handguns are readily available, banning handguns is an exercise in futility. Canada is powerless to prevent the black market from supplying all the arms necessary for criminal enterprise.

In its September 30, 1993, press release, based on the Angus Reid Poll they sponsored, the Coalition for Gun Control stated that 71% of Canadians favoured entirely prohibiting handguns for civilians. The question they asked was:

"Handguns in Canada are also categorized as restricted weapons which can be owned by civilians who are members of gun clubs or who are gun collectors. These guns cannot be used for hunting. It has been suggested that handguns, which are easily concealed, should be entirely prohibited for civilians. Overall do you support the banning of all handguns for civilian use in Canada?"

There are two major problems with this question,. First, it is loaded with misleading phrases like, "cannot be used for hunting," and "easily concealed." Second, it glosses over the fact that it would be necessary to confiscate nearly a million handguns from their authorized owners to enforce such a complete prohibition.

To make laws that control behaviour terms must be precisely defined. The same word may mean quite different things in everyday discourse and legal terminology. The word "prohibit," in common usage means, "to forbid by authority, to prevent from doing something." The word "ban" means "to prohibit by legal means." The term "prohibited weapon" requires seven subsections of the Criminal Code (84. (1)). It does not mean that the weapon cannot be possessed, in most cases, by at least some class of authorized people. C-68 added over half a million "short-barrelled" and "small calibre" pistols to the class of "prohibited weapons," but this does not mean that their current owners can not keep and use them. For there to be a "prohibition" or "banning" in the everyday sense, and the sense suggested by the Reid-Coalition for Gun Control question, the guns would all have to be confiscated.

There is some question as to whether Canadian citizens have any property rights, they are not mentioned in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, but are a tradition of British Common Law. Traditionally, compensation is paid for property taken by the government. If the government confiscated a million registered handguns (conservatively worth \$300 each on average), the total payment to gun owners would be in the range of a third of a billion dollars, not counting legal and administrative costs. These costs and the social conflicts it would engender, have led to a "confiscation in place" policy of "grandfathering" categories of current owners. The owners are stripped of many of their property rights, they can only sell to other owners in the same category, on their deaths the guns will be confiscated, but no compensation is paid to the estate.

According to the Coalition 71% of Canadians support a complete ban on handguns for civilian use. But does the public support the measures that would be necessary to achieve such a prohibition? Should the handguns of collectors, target shooters, and those who had them for self-defense be confiscated? Only a minority of respondents said "yes."

Whose Handguns Should be Confiscated?

Three questions were introduced by the statement, "Many Canadians have police permits to possess handguns for collecting, target shooting and self-defense purposes."

Many Canadians have police permits to possess handguns for collecting, target shooting, and self-defence purposes.		
13.1 Do you think that Collectors handguns should be confiscated?		
Responses	Number	Percent
Yes	306	20.3
No	1116	74.2
Don't Know, Refused	82	5.5
Total Responses	1,505	100.0

About three out of four respondents said that collectors' handguns should not be confiscated, an additional five percent said they did not know. Thus only 20% of the respondents thought that collectors' handguns should be

confiscated. These questions were collapsed to include the "don't know" responses with the "no" responses, so that the minority who favoured confiscation could be analyzed.

There were no statistically significant differences between regions of Canada for this question. Respondents in large cities were most favourable to confiscation, with 25% in favour, while only 13% of rural respondents shared the opinion. Fourteen percent of males supported confiscating collectors handguns, as did 27% of women. Younger people were more in favour (25%) than older people (18%). There was no significant difference between respondents with different levels of education. Respondents in the lowest income group were more in favour of confiscation (30%) than those in other income groups (18%).

Gun owners were 91% opposed, while non-gun owners were 24% in favour. Among those who disagree strongly with Canadians having the right to own a firearm, 63% oppose confiscation of collectors' handguns, while 64% of those who strongly oppose hunting also oppose the confiscation of collectors handguns. Among those with "Right and Hunt" values, 91% oppose the confiscation of collectors handguns. Among those who believe gun control to be ineffective, 92% oppose confiscation of collectors handguns, while only 32% of those who think gun control is effective support confiscation. Among those who oppose registration, 94% oppose confiscation of collectors handguns, while even among those who support registration at any cost, 71% oppose and 29% favour confiscating collectors handguns.

Almost three quarters of the respondents oppose confiscating the handguns of target shooters.

13.2 Do you think that Target shooters' handguns should be confiscated?		
Responses:	Number	Percent
Yes	363	24.1
No	1060	70.4
Don't Know, Refused	82	5.4
Total Responses	1,505	100.0

Opposition to confiscating target shooters' handguns ranged from 83% in the Prairie Provinces and the oldest age group, to 68% among women and the lowest income category. Some 90% of gun-owners disagreed, as did 72% of those who don't own any. A majority of those who disagree strongly with the right to own a firearm (56%), of those who strongly oppose hunting (57%), and of those with "No Right No Hunt" values (51%) also oppose the confiscation target shooters handguns. Among those who think gun control ineffective, 90% oppose confiscation of target shooters handguns, while 63% of those who think it effective also oppose it. Among those who oppose registration, 95% oppose confiscating target shooters handguns, and 62% of those who favour registration at any cost share this opinion.

The confiscation of handguns from collectors and target shooters is clearly not acceptable to the majority of Canadians, even among those who think Canadians should not have a right to own a firearm of any kind.

Canadians are ambivalent about the use of firearms for self-defense. Although "defense of life" is one of the legal reasons for possessing a handgun, in recent years such permits have been rarely issued. Canadians have been subjected to a barrage of statements about the uselessness and danger of keeping a gun for self-defense, often based on Dr. Arthur Kellermann's U.S. studies. The usual mental image is of a handgun in a bedside table, just waiting to shoot a spouse, be turned against the home owner by a robber, or stolen. People rarely think of those who work in bear country, or the late-night convenience store owner. Urban people rarely think of the danger a rabid animal poses to livestock and children. On an abstract level, self-defense has become defined as a bad and dangerous practice, but 60% of the respondents said they would use a firearm to protect themselves or their family.

Unlike collecting and target shooting, self-defense implies the potential use of a gun against a living animal or person. Still, only a minority of the respondents favour the idea of confiscating self-defense handguns.

13.3 Do you think that people who own handguns for self-defence should have their guns confiscated?		
Responses	Number	Percent
Yes	714	47.5
No	649	43.1
Don't Know, Refused	142	9.4

Total Responses	1,505	100.0
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Only in Quebec do a majority (55%) favour confiscation of hand guns for self defence, everywhere a majority (55%) reject it. In large cities a very slight majority (51%) favour it, the concept is rejected elsewhere. A majority of men reject confiscation (58%), while a majority of women favour it (53%). Confiscation is favoured by the youngest respondents (55% in favour), but rejected by half of the middle aged respondents and 63% of the older respondents. Confiscation is rejected by respondents at all educational levels, except for university graduates - who were most likely to reject confiscation of target shooters' handguns, and most likely to favour confiscation of self-defense handguns. Attitudes on the confiscation of self-defense handguns were not significantly related to the income levels.

A slight majority of non-gun owners (51%) favoured confiscation of self-defense handguns, while a large majority of gun owners (68%) rejected it. Basic values play an important role in determining attitudes toward confiscating self-defense handguns. Those who have "Right and Hunt" values are 68% opposed to confiscation. Those who have "No Right No Hunt" values (72% favour) are strongly in favour of confiscating self-defense handguns.

Overall, the concept of other people's self-defense is troubling to Canadians, though most say they would defend themselves. A majority (54%) of those who say they would not use a gun to defend themselves or their families from an aggressor favour confiscating self-defense handguns, while a majority (57%) of those who would use a gun oppose confiscating self-defense handguns. Fundamental values seem to have guided responses to this question. Those who want to restrict, register, and eliminate firearms are the only people likely to support confiscation of self-defense guns.

The three questions on confiscation were combined into a single index to see how much support for confiscation of all handguns actually exists. If a respondent said that none of the three types of users, collectors, target shooters, or self-defense owners, should have their handguns confiscated, they were categorized as "none." If the respondent said one or two types (usually "self-defense" was one of the types) should be confiscated they were categorized as "some." If the respondent said all three types of users should have their handguns confiscated, the equivalent of a total prohibition of handguns, they were categorized as "all."

Handgun Confiscation Index		
Types of users handguns (Collector, Target, Self-Defence) respondent would confiscate	Number	Percent
None (No confiscation of handguns)	682	45.3
Some (One or two types)	622	41.4
All (All three types of users)	200	13.3
Total Responses	1,505	100.0

Overall 45% of the respondents did not support confiscating any handguns, 41% supported confiscating handguns from one or two types of users, and 13% supported confiscating from all three types of users. This result stands in remarkable contradiction to the findings of the Coalition for Gun Control Survey which found that 71% of Canadians favoured entirely prohibiting handguns for civilians. When Canadians are asked to make a "public judgement," rather than expressing a "mass opinion," support for prohibiting all handguns drops from 71% to 13%.

Opposition to confiscation is highest in the Prairie provinces with 57% "none," lowest in Quebec with 34% "none." Support for complete confiscation is highest in British Columbia, 16% "all" and lowest (10% "all") in the Atlantic and Prairie provinces. Quebeckers are highest in their support for "some" confiscation (51%), reflecting their willingness to confiscate self-defense handguns.

Opposition to confiscation is highest in rural areas (51% "none"), lowest in large cities (40% "none"). Support for complete confiscation is highest in the large cities at 16%, lowest in the rural areas at 8%. A majority of men, 53%, oppose confiscation, while only 38% of women are opposed. Women are twice as likely (18%) as men (9%) to support complete confiscation.

A majority of older Canadians, 55%, oppose confiscation as do only 38% of the youngest age group. Support for complete confiscation is at 18% in the youngest age group, and 10% in the oldest age group. There is no significant relationship between the respondent's educational level or income level and support or opposition to confiscation. Understandably gun owners are most opposed to confiscation at 64%, while only 41% of non-gun

owners are opposed. Sixteen percent of non-gun owners are in favour of complete confiscation, while only 4% of gun owners feel this way.

Again, the respondent's basic values are the most important influence on their views of confiscation. Among those with "Right and Hunt" values, 63% oppose all confiscation. On the other side of the equation, those with "No Right No Hunt" values 32% favour complete confiscation.

Among those who think that gun control is not effective, 66% oppose confiscation, while of those who think it is effective only 29% oppose confiscation. Only 5% of those who think that gun control is not effective support complete confiscation, while 21% of those who think gun control is effective support complete confiscation. Among those who are opposed to registration 72% oppose confiscation, while among those who favour registration at any cost, only 30% oppose it. Among those who oppose registration only 3% favour complete confiscation, while 21% of those who favour registration at any cost agree.

Values, Effectiveness, and Support for Confiscation

As is the case with Registration, those whose basic values are either "Right and Hunt" or "Mixed" oppose confiscation if they think that gun control is ineffective, but are somewhat more likely to support it if they think that gun control is effective. Among those with "No Right No Hunt" values there is no significant relationship between their views on the effectiveness of gun control and their attitude on confiscation. They tend to strongly (over 30%) support complete confiscation whether they think that gun control is ineffective or effective. Their basic values rule their judgements, and the benefits or lack thereof, are irrelevant.

Attitude on Confiscation, by Perceived Effectiveness, by Basic Values						
Basic Values	Confiscation	Perceived Effectiveness of Stricter Gun Control				
		Not Effective	Neutral	Is Effective	Total Percent	
Right and Hunt	NONE	74%	57%	46%	63%	
	SOME	24%	39%	46%	33%	
	ALL	2%	4%	7%	4%	
	Column%	100%	100%	*99%	100%	
	Row%	45%	39%	16%	100%	
	number =	236	208	84	528	
Mixed	NONE	63%	46%	31%	45%	
	SOME	34%	45%	52%	45%	
	ALL	3%	9%	16%	10%	
	Column %	100%	100%	*99%	100%	
	Row %	22%	44%	34%	100%	
	number =	131	271	208	610	
No Right, No Hunt	NONE	32%	23%	18%	22%	
	SOME	38%	46%	48%	46%	
	ALL	30%	31%	34%	32%	
	Column %	100%	100%	100%	100%	
	Row%	10%	43%	47%	100%	
	number =	37	158	173	368	
Total Responses	Row%	27%	42%	31%	100%	
	numbers =	404	637	465	**1,506	

* Totals may not equal 100% because of rounding.

** Total Number of Cases may not equal 1,505 because of weighting.

Support for confiscating handguns from all types of owners is exceptionally high among those with "No Right No Hunt" values even when they think that gun control is ineffective. This finding is very discouraging for those who think that public policy should be based on reason and fact. This "value rationality," as Max Weber would have termed it (as opposed to "instrumental rationality"), introduces a fundamentally destructive element into the gun control debate. If it does not matter whether a policy makes sense or is effective to some participants in a debate; if a policy is supported in spite of the fact that its proponents do not believe it will work; if reason is rejected, then debate becomes a sham, and arbitrary, irrational emotion becomes the basis for public policy.

Conclusions

Again the distinction between mass opinion and public judgement is important. Many people "wish" all handguns would go away, just as many wish for a world without war, injustice, or poverty. When it comes to making a judgement about actually seizing someone's property, other values become relevant.

Canadians do not support the banning of handguns if it means confiscation. Even those who would confiscate self-defense handguns might alter their judgement if they had a more realistic idea of the situations in which "defense of life" permits are granted. The respondent's basic values with regard to firearms ownership and hunting are extremely important in determining the position taken on confiscation. For those who reject the right to own a firearm and oppose hunting, being true to their values is more important than the results they anticipate.

Chapter 9. Firearms Ownership

No one knows how many firearms or firearms owners there are in Canada. Estimates range from six million to over twenty million firearms. Every method of estimating these figures has serious flaws. Universal registration will not improve the situation as it will be widely ignored or evaded. Reliable estimates could make the cost of registration and other gun control proposals easier to calculate, but are hard to come by. The two principal methods used for making estimates are counting and questioning.

Counting relies on import, export and sales figures. Since these figures do not stretch back into the nineteenth century, some sort of estimate of the existing stock of firearms at a given time must be used as a starting point. These starting point estimates are themselves unreliable, depending as they do on educated guesses or survey estimates made some time in the past. Additionally, there is often confusion about the number of firearm owners - in some estimates everyone in the household is counted as an owner, in others only the actual owners are counted. The estimates based on counting tend to be at the higher end of the 6 to 20 million range.

Questioning relies on sample surveys in which individuals report the firearms ownership of their household. Sampling problems aside, estimates derived from interviews have several serious problems. The most important is whether respondents tell the truth - or know it. Households may have more than one firearm owner, but this has not been routinely determined. When estimating the number of firearms in the country survey researchers typically allow for up to five of any one kind per gun owning household. If they happen to call a collector with 300 rare shotguns, there is no way of recording this number or taking it into account in the estimates.

Neither the survey interviewer nor the respondent may know whether something is a firearm. The old flintlock over the mantle is only a firearm if the owner intends to discharge it. The air-gun in the closet is a "firearm" only if it can shoot a pellet at over 152.4 meters per second, under the Criminal Code definition. Some air-guns shoot at over 152.4 meters per second with one brand of pellets, making them firearms, and under 152.4 meters per second with other brands, making them non-firearms. The definition depends on the brand of pellets in the house.

A respondent may not think of the old shotgun or unregistered pistol in the attic when the interviewer asks - or even know it is there. They may be totally uninterested in firearms; they are the hobby of another member of the household. They may fear that telling an unknown telephone interviewer is an invitation to burglary. They may feel that it is nobody's business to know that they have guns or fear that their ownership may become known to the police and they will be forced to register. They may be uncertain of the legal status of their firearms - as most Canadians currently are. They may not know exactly how many guns of what types are in the household. The wife of a collector may only be able to say there are "many" guns in the house. The guns in the household may be stolen, and thus unlikely to be mentioned. The respondent may disagree with gun ownership, and not mention guns in the house that belong to someone else. Currently many Canadians consider gun ownership to be "politically incorrect" and do not want to mention that they or someone else in the household are gun owners. Because of these problems, estimates based on survey questions tend to be at the lower end of the six to twenty million range. Under-reporting of firearms ownership has been noted numerous times in the survey research literature (Erskine 1972; Kennett 1975; Stinchcombe 1980; Kleck 1991).

Under-Reporting

In this survey a serious discrepancy was found in the number of married males and married females reporting a gun in their home. The pattern is found in all community sizes and all regions of Canada. The following table shows this pattern, using the unweighted sample (actual responses), for the five regions of Canada. In every region of Canada married females are less likely to report a firearm in their home than are married males. The difference is most marked in Ontario and British Columbia, followed by Quebec. There is a much smaller amount of under reporting in the Atlantic and Prairie provinces. This result, in conjunction with other findings in this report, would seem to indicate that married female under-reporting is highest in those provinces where firearms are least appreciated.

Are there firearms of any kind in your home or garage, by Gender, by Region of Canada (Married Persons Only, unweighted sample)		
Percent of Married Respondents Saying "Yes"	Gender	
	Male	Female
Atlantic	51.9%	44.8%
Quebec	37.5%	20.3%
Ontario	36.2%	11.2%
Prairies	46.1%	42.4%
<u>British Columbia</u>	<u>42.3%</u>	<u>18.6%</u>
Total	38.5%	22.8%

It is probably not only married women who under-report, but this is just the one area in which comparison can be made. If this is a general pattern, the estimates of gun owning households based on surveys are very much too low.

List of Studies Showing Under-Reporting of Firearms by Married Females		
	Percent of Married Males and Females reporting a gun in their home	
	Males	Females
1995 Canadian Facts Representative National Survey n=1,505	38.5%	22.8%
1987 NORC GSS n≈1500 (Difference probably not significant)	59.3%	57.9%
1993 Kleck National Self-Defence Survey, n= 1832	50.1%	37.4%
Alan Lizotte - Illinois Survey in the 1970s	Higher	Lower

Additional suggestions that under-reporting is not limited to married women comes from Alan Lizotte's Rochester Youth Development Study where 27.2% of boys and 16.8% of girls reported a gun in their parent's home. One female Canadian commercial survey researcher, in a personal communication, suggested that the problem might be men over-reporting firearms ownership, rather than women under-reporting - possible, but unlikely. Currently, claiming to own a gun when one does not is as likely as a non-smoker claiming to go through three packs a day.

One of the serious drawbacks of the 1991 Department of Justice/Angus Reid survey of firearms ownership, on which the government's estimate of firearms depends, is that they used a screening question and only interviewed people who acknowledged firearm ownership. In this study the principal focus was on the attitudes of the Canadian population, not specifically on estimating the firearms stock in the country, so everyone was interviewed in the sample. This allowed the exploration of demographic and attitudinal characteristics of those who refused to answer the question about household gun ownership.

The "refusers" had roughly the same ratio of men and women as acknowledged owners. They tended to be a bit more concentrated in the 35 to 49 age group than the acknowledged owners, and came from slightly fewer middle income households, more than from low and high income households. They were disproportionately concentrated in Ontario and were heavily concentrated in the "some college or university" educational category. The "refusers" had the same rural - urban distribution as the acknowledged gun owners.

Do the "refusers" have guns? They are more likely than acknowledged gun owners to "strongly agree" that Canadians should have the right to own a firearm. They are considerably more likely to discuss guns and gun control "frequently" or "occasionally" than acknowledged gun owners. They are considerably more likely to reject registration than acknowledged gun owners. On these attitudinal variables the "refusers" think and act like acknowledged gun owners, only more strongly. They certainly appear to be gun owners.

On the basis of these results we have "coded" the "refusers" as gun owners for purposes of some of the analysis. Of course we do not have any details of the types of guns they might own, or their reason for owning. After their refusal they were not asked these questions. When the analysis turns on a question the refusers were not asked, they are obviously not included.

In Reid's 1991 survey, 23% of the households were found to own firearms. We also found 23% of the households acknowledged owning firearms. When we make adjustments for the under-reporting by married

women and the refusers, we calculate that at least 28.5% of the households in Canada have firearms. This is a minimal estimate, 24% higher overall than Reid's estimate. We have not taken into account under-reporting by anyone except married women and refusers, because we do not have the data to do so. Undoubtedly more under-reporting exists and more than 28.5% of Canadian households have guns.

As detailed in Chapter 7, over a quarter of acknowledged gun owners say they will not register all their guns. What level of compliance can be expected of those who refuse to admit they have guns, or lie about it?

Firearms Ownership

The following table shows the responses to the two questions about a firearm in the household and personal ownership. It also shows the results of moving the refusers into the gun owner category.

Q.15 Are there firearms of any kind in your home or garage?			
Q17. Do any of these firearms belong to you personally?			
Responses		Number	Percent
Q 15.	Yes	346	23.0
	No	1136	75.5
	Refused, DK	23	1.5
Total Responses		1,505	100.0
Q. 17	Yes	219	14.6
	No	127	8.4
	No or Refused, DK on Q15	1159	77.0
	Total Responses	1,505	100.0
Q 15 & Q 17 Recoded to reflect "refusers" as gun owners	None	1136	75.5
	In home, not owner	127	8.4
	Owner (plus refused, DK)	242	16.1
Total Responses		1,505	100.0

The number of cases may not add correctly because of weighting. Percentages may not add to 100% because of rounding

Despite recognising that refusers and some married women are probably gun owners, even though they say they are not, they cannot be included in the analysis because they were not asked any questions about their gun ownership. The analysis has to be based on those who acknowledge their gun ownership.

Acknowledged firearms ownership varies widely by region. Household ownership is highest in the Prairie provinces (39%) and the Atlantic provinces (36%), and lowest in Quebec (19%). In rural regions 44% of households own firearms, while in large cities only 11% own them. A third of households (33%) where a male was interviewed report ownership, while 16% of households where a female was interviewed report ownership. This may reflect different ownership patterns by gender as well as under-reporting. In terms of personal ownership, 30% of men and 3% of women say they own firearms.

In households where the respondent was over 50 years old, 31% had firearms, while only 18% of households where the respondent was younger than 35 had firearms. Personal ownership was higher in the older group (23%), and lower in the younger group (9%). Firearms ownership is more predominant in households with lower educational levels, 31% where the respondent had less than high school, 18% where the respondent was a university graduate. Personal ownership follows the same pattern, 23% for those with less than high school graduation, and 12% for university graduates. Higher income respondents were more likely to report both household (26%) and personal (18%) ownership than lower income respondents (16% and 12%); perhaps higher income households can better afford all consumer items, including firearms. Married respondents were most likely to report both household (33%) and personal (22%) ownership, followed by those in common-law relationships (23% and 13%). Single, separated, divorced and widowed respondents reported lower levels of ownership.

Types of Firearms Owned

The respondents who acknowledged that there was a firearm in their home or garage were asked if they had any shotguns, rifles or handguns.

If Q15 (YES) ASK						
* Q. 16.1 Are there any shotguns?						
* Q. 16.2 Are there any rifles?						
* Q. 16.3 Are there any handguns?						
Type of Firearm	Shotgun		Rifle		Handgun	
Responses	#	%	#	%	#	%
Yes	242	16.1	268	17.8	50	3.3
No	95	6.3	61	4.1	291	19.3
Don't Know/Refused	9	.6	17	1.2	6	.4
Not Asked	1159	77.0	1159	77.0	1159	77.0
Total Responses	1,505	100.0	1,505	100.0	1,505	100.0

Numbers may not add to total because of weighting. Percents may not add to 100% because of rounding. Numbers and percents do not represent those who refused to say whether there was a firearm in their home.

Shotguns were acknowledged in 27% of the homes in the Atlantic provinces, but only 11% of those in Ontario. Rifles were acknowledged in 32% of Prairie households, but only 11% of Quebec households. Handguns were most frequently acknowledged in the Atlantic provinces (6%), and least often in Quebec (1%). Quebec was significantly different from the Rest of Canada in both acknowledged rifle and acknowledged handgun ownership. All types of firearms were more frequently acknowledged in rural areas than in urban areas. In the rural areas, 32% acknowledged shotguns, 34% rifles, and 6% handguns. In the large cities 7% acknowledged shotguns, 8% rifles, and 1% handguns. Males were more likely to acknowledge each of the three types of guns in the home, than were females.

Older respondents were significantly more likely to acknowledge each of the three types of firearm in their homes than younger people. This may reflect several factors: growing up in a period when guns were more freely available; having had a longer time to acquire them; having more financial resources; and having a longer time to inherit them from family members.

Respondents with lower levels of education were significantly more likely to acknowledge shotguns and rifles in their homes, but university graduates were very slightly more likely to acknowledge handguns. Higher income respondents were significantly more likely to acknowledge having each of the three types of firearm in their household than were lower income respondents. Married respondents were significantly more likely to acknowledge having each of the three types of firearm in their household than were single, separate, divorced or widowed respondents.

Reasons for Firearm Ownership

People may have many different reasons for owning firearms. Some are utilitarian - hunting, employment, predator control, and self-defense. Others are expressive, such as collecting and target shooting. Other reasons may be harder to classify. Probably most people have several reasons for owning a firearm. A farmer may keep a rifle put a deer in the freezer for the winter, but also for predator control. A single woman dairy farmer may keep a shotgun for predator control, but also to feel more secure during the hour she is waiting for the police when a gang of rowdy drunks shows up. Many people might be target shooters, but also collect guns, and think of one in particular as a home defense weapon. Although we asked, "What is the main reason your household has firearms?" we recommend future researchers make this a multiple response question.

Q16.4 What is the main reason your household has firearms?		
Responses of those with firearms in home	Number	Percent
Hunting	242	70.0
Target Shooting	26	7.4
Collecting	36	10.3
Employment	3	.9
Predator Control	16	4.6
Self-Defence	5	1.5
Other	19	5.4

Total Responses	346	100.0
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Numbers may not add to total because of weighting. Percents may not add to 100% because of rounding.
 Numbers and percents do not reflect those who did not acknowledge ownership.

The main reason for owning firearms in Canada is hunting. A strong majority of respondents in rural areas are favourable towards hunting, a majority of big city respondents are opposed to hunting. This difference in attitudes is an underlying value conflict that drives much of the "gun control" debate.

In Quebec, 88% of acknowledged gun owning households cite hunting as their main reason for owning firearms, while only 58% of British Columbia households cite hunting as their main reason. In rural households, 75% own firearms for hunting, while only 58% of big city households cite hunting as their reason for owning guns. In large cities 15% cite target shooting, 12% collecting, and 5% self-defense, as their main reason for owning firearms.

Women (79%) are significantly more likely than men (65%) to cite hunting as the main reason for household firearms ownership. Presumably, in most cases, this reflects their husband's stated reason for owning a firearm. Hunting is somewhat more important in the under 35 age group than it is in the older age groups.

Though the difference is not significant, low and medium income households are slightly more likely to own firearms for hunting than high income households. This may be because the contribution of hunting to the household economy is greater for lower income families. Hunting is the most frequently cited reason for ownership in common-law households (84%), least likely among the divorced or separated (53%).

Target shooting is most frequently cited as the main reason for ownership in Ontario (15%), and British Columbia (12%). It is least cited in the Atlantic Provinces (0%) and Quebec (3%). It is significantly more likely to be cited as the main reason for firearms ownership by big city residents (15%) than by rural residents (2%). Rural use of firearms is more utilitarian, urban more expressive. Men were slightly more likely to cite target shooting (9%) as the main reason for ownership than women (5%). It is most popular in the 35 to 49 age group (13%), and less likely to be cited by younger (4%) and older (5%) respondents. Target shooting is most cited by university graduates (17%), and least by high school graduates (3%) as the main reason for owning firearms.

Target shooting is expensive, and produces no economic return, so it is concentrated among middle (8%) and high income (9%) households, with no low income households citing it as their main reason for ownership. Target shooting was cited by 16% of separated and divorced respondents as their main reason for owning firearms.

Collecting was cited as the main reason for 17% in British Columbia, and only 3% in Quebec. Given that 88% of Quebecois cite hunting as their primary reason for ownership there is not much room for other reasons. Collecting is equally cited in rural and urban areas. Men (13%) are more likely to cite collection as the main reason for household ownership than women (5%).

Collecting is significantly more likely to be cited as the main reason for ownership by those over 50 years old (15%) than by those in the youngest (8%) and middle (7%) age groups. This makes sense from a life course perspective, older people may not be able to hunt or target shoot as well as they used to, but maintain their interest in firearms through collecting.

Though the differences are not significant, low income households are slightly more likely to cite collecting as the main reason for ownership than are middle and high income households. Collecting is slightly more important among the lowest and highest educational groups, somewhat less for those in between. Collecting is cited by 23% of those who are separated or divorced as their reason for owning firearms, much higher than all other marital statuses.

Predator control is most frequently cited in the Prairie provinces (13%), and in rural areas (7%). Interestingly it is also high among single respondents (9%) and divorced and separated respondents (8%). Self-defense is most frequently cited as the main reason for ownership by big city residents (5%), and by persons in common-law relationships (8%).

Multiple Ownership

"How many people in this household personally own firearms?" - a question not asked by Reid. Yet it is important in calculating actual levels of personal ownership.

Q 17.1 How many people in this household personally own firearms?		
Responses	Number	Percent
Zero	7	1.9
One	303	87.6
Two	30	8.6
Three	6	1.7
Four	0	0.0
Five	0	0.0
Six	1	0.2
Total Responses	346	100.0

Numbers may not add to total because of weighting. Percents may not add to 100% because of rounding. Neither numbers nor percents reflect those who did not acknowledge ownership.

As the above table shows, just over 10% of households cite multiple owners. Those who say there are no personal owners are mostly older widows who may have their late husband's gun in the house, or the firearm may belong to a son or daughter who is away from home. The one person who cited six owners is a divorced male in rural British Columbia. He may have five children living with him who own firearms, be living in a lumber camp, or it may be a recording error.

For analysis this question was collapsed into two categories, single owner (includes "zero" because they said there was a gun in the home, even if no member of the household acknowledges owning it), and multiple owners in the household.

Multiple ownership is most common in the Atlantic provinces (17%), least in Quebec (5%). It is most common in rural areas (13%) and among lower income respondents (19%). None of the background variables are significantly correlated with multiple ownership. In all probability, multiple ownership is most common in homes where unmarried young people still live at home, but the data to test this hypothesis is lacking. Respondents who acknowledge owning all three types of firearm (shotgun, rifle, handgun) also report a high level of multiple ownership (21%). Multiple ownership might be considered to be an indicator of family interest in hunting, or firearms in general.

Conclusions

There appear to be considerably more firearms and firearms owners in Canada than has been estimated by previous surveys. Many of these unacknowledged firearms are in the hands of people who refuse to acknowledge ownership and who are consequently likely to resist registration and other attempts to regulate them.

Acknowledged firearms ownership is highest among older men, in rural areas, in the Prairie provinces. Owners tend to have above average incomes, and slightly below average educational levels.

The overwhelming reason given for owning firearms is hunting, though collecting and target shooting are also important. The "No Right No Hunt" attitude found in urban areas is a significant, though not often admitted, motivation for demands for more "gun control." The conflict between those who enjoy hunting and shooting and those who would extinguish these activities seems destined to continue.

Slightly over 10% of gun owning households have multiple gun owners. This provides another indication that the estimates of the number of gun owners is larger than anticipated by the drafters of C-68.

Chapter 10. Self Defense

Self defense is a troublesome right. On the one hand, it would seem obvious that all people have -- or should have -- the inherent right to use force to defend themselves from assault. Criminal codes in many countries include self defense as a legitimate justification for the use of deadly force. On the other hand, the right of self defense threatens the rule of law. It is too easy for revenge or even aggression to be confused with legitimate self defense.

Canadians typically view the debate on self protection as restricted to the United States. The prevailing attitude is that there is no need for self defense in Canada as superior social systems have eliminated these problems. Many Canadians prefer to believe that problems of violent crime are limited to the rather tumultuous republic to the south.

It should come as no surprise that there are surprisingly few organized groups that officially support self defense, even in principle, or that teach self defense in any form. Talk show hosts discuss violence against women for hours without mentioning the possibility of women using physical force to defend against those who seek to assault or rape them. Not only do the police actively discourage self defense in general, but armed self defense is widely considered illegal.

In Canada the topic of weapon use in self defense has been almost completely ignored. Only recently have studies been published that attempted to estimate the frequency with which firearms are used in self defense in Canada. (Mauser 96). A few recent studies have investigated the carrying of weapons by Canadians (Sacco 1995; Kong 1994), while others have examined attitudes towards the use of firearms in self defense (Mauser 1990; Mauser and Margolis 1992). Does Canada differ from the United States with respect to the defensive use of firearms? Although dangerous animals and criminal violence exist in both countries, firearms ownership is not as widespread in Canada.

Unlike the United States, the federal government is responsible for criminal law and the provinces are generally responsible for enforcement - although most provinces rely upon the RCMP to act as the provincial and local police force. This introduces a further element of national uniformity. Despite disavowals by police officials, the Canadian Criminal Code does include the right of citizens to use deadly force to protect themselves (sections 34, 35, and 37).

In Canada, the key provision in the criminal code is that no one may use "*more force than is necessary*" and then only when "*he believes on reasonable grounds that he can not otherwise preserve himself from death or grievous bodily harm.*" In section 35, the code goes on to require that one must show that, "*he declined further conflict and quitted or retreated from it (the assault) as far as it was feasible to do so before the necessity of preserving himself ... arose.*" Moreover, the right to use physical force to defend non-family members is more limited than it is in many states, as are a Canadians' rights to repulse trespassers on one's own property, or to use force to stop the commission of serious or violent crimes (Sections 24, 40, and 41).

Self defense is severely circumscribed by more conditions than are typically found in the United States. A wide range of self defensive weapons (eg, Mace, pepper spray, small handguns, tasers and stun guns) are prohibited, ownership is punishable by up to 10 years imprisonment. For all practical purposes, it has been impossible to own a handgun for self protection since 1977. Recent firearms legislation now requires firearms to not only be unloaded when stored in one's residence but must also be put under lock and key. Judging from news reports, many of those who use a firearm to defend themselves, are charged with one or more criminal violations -- unsafe storage, careless use of firearm, or possession of a prohibited weapon -- and then they have to prove in court that the firearm had been used in self defense.

Another important difference between the United States and Canada is enforcement. Anyone who uses a weapon in self defense is likely to be charged in Canada and have to defend themselves in court, even if the attacker is not injured seriously. The charges may be "possession of a prohibited weapon," or "careless use/storage of a firearm," rather than "assault" or "attempted murder." The Crown apparently is determined to discourage people from forcefully defending themselves.

In Montreal, a citizen who struggled with an robber who placed a gun against his head was referred to the crown prosecutor for possible murder charges after the gun discharged, killing the robber (the Crown considered but declined to prosecute). A store owner who armed himself and arrested four thieves in his store was termed a "vigilante" in the press (*Montreal Gazette*, "Spectators cheer as vigilante shopkeeper with shotgun goes free," 9

Aug 95, p. A8). An American couple were barred from Canada for five years, and fined \$700, because they had a can of pepper spray to ward off dogs when they were jogging (*Montreal Gazette*, "Tourism loses its spice," 8 Jul 95, p. A12).

Do Canadians really believe that they should be passive victims when faced with death? Is the legal culture created by Parliament an accurate reflection of Canadian thinking? Or is this a replay of the debate over capital punishment, a concept which the public overwhelmingly supports but Parliament repeatedly forbids.

Would Canadians Defend Themselves?

This hypothetical question was first suggested by David Young (1991). "If you or your family were threatened with death or serious injury by an aggressor and you had access to a firearm, would you use it to defend yourself or not?" Legally, such a situation would allow for the use of deadly force. Obviously, most Canadians do not have access to a firearm, and few have ever faced such a situation. The question also ignores the requirements imposed by law - all firearms have to be stored locked and unloaded - which make successful self defense unlikely for the law abiding. But the question gets to the heart of the matter, if it were possible, would Canadians defend themselves or their families by using a firearm?

Q.24. If you or your family were threatened with death or serious injury by an aggressor and you had access to a firearm, would you use it to defend yourself or not?		
Responses	Number	Percent
Definitely yes	489	32.5
Probably yes	407	27.1
Probably no	199	13.2
Definitely no	202	13.4
Would never have access to a firearm	50	3.3
Refused	7	.4
Don't know	151	10.0
Total Responses	1,505	100.0

Some 60% of the respondents showed a willingness to themselves with a firearm. There were no significant differences between regions of Canada. Residents of rural areas, small and medium sized cities and large cities were all equally likely to say they would use a firearm to defend themselves. Men (71%) were significantly more likely than women (48%) to say they would use a firearm to defend themselves or their families, which probably reflects traditional gender roles. Younger people were significantly more likely to say they would defend themselves (68%) than older people (49%). Those in the highest educational category, university graduates, were significantly more likely to say they would defend themselves with a gun (66%) than those with less than high school (55%). Those with higher incomes were significantly more likely to say they would defend themselves (63%) than those with lower incomes (54%). In some of these instances, people with characteristics that usually lead to being in favour of gun control are the people most willing to use a gun to defend themselves.

A majority of gun owners (67%) and non-gun owners (59%) would use a gun to defend themselves. A majority (53%) of those who disagree strongly with the idea that Canadians should have a right to own a firearm said they would defend themselves with a gun as do a majority (56%) of those who strongly oppose hunting. Even among those with "No Right No Hunt" values, a small majority (52%) say they would defend themselves.

A majority (53%) of those who feel that gun control laws are "effective" would use a gun to defend themselves, and a larger majority (69%) of those who feel gun control is ineffective would do so. A majority (56%) of those who want to register all guns without regard to the costs would use one to defend themselves, while a slightly larger majority (61%) of those who oppose registration would do so. Only among those who would confiscate all handguns do we find something less than a majority (47%) who would defend themselves, 58% of those who would confiscate some handguns and 65% of those who oppose confiscation would defend themselves.

It appears that, when personal or family safety is at risk, most of those who oppose guns would still use one for their own protection. To see just how far personal interest went, those who were in favour of confiscating self-defense handguns were examined to determine if they would use a gun to defend themselves. As the following table shows, a majority (54%) of those who wanted to confiscate the self-defense handguns of other people would

use a gun for self defense if they themselves were threatened. This is similar to the finding that 75% of the students at Concordia University who signed a petition to ban all handguns said they would use a gun to defend themselves (Buckner 1994).

Q24. If you or your family were threatened with death or serious injury by an aggressor and you had access to a firearm, would you use it defend yourself or not?					
Q13.3 Do you think that people who own handguns for self-defence should have their guns confiscated					
		No, DK		Yes	
Responses to Q.24		Number	%	Number	%
No, DK, Refused		280	35.4	328	45.9
Yes		511	64.6	386	54.1
Total Responses		791	100.0	714	100.0

Perhaps those who say they would personally use guns they favour confiscating from everyone else have not worked through the logic of their position. These inconsistencies do, however, provide an interesting insight into the depth of thought that goes into much of the gun control rhetoric.

The Use of Guns for Self Defense in Canada

When Mauser reported that a few Canadians said they had used a gun for self-defense (Gun Control is not Crime Control - Fraser Institute), there was an immediate derogatory response from the Coalition for Gun control:

"I would no more rely on the arguments put forth by the gun lobby about arming for self-protection than I would rely on the advice of the tobacco lobby, which steadfastly insists that smoking is not addictive," said Wendy Cukier, president of the coalition. ... Ms. Cukier said respondents could also have meant that they felt the presence of a gun in their homes offered protection, even if they didn't use it. *"Mauser's study only measures perceptions. There is no evidence these perceptions are based on fact. And the police report very few cases where there is evidence to support these claims."* (Globe & Mail, 19 Mar 95, p A6). Why is it so important for the Coalition for Gun Control to deny that guns are sometimes used for self defense? Why does a government spokesman say: *"The questions are too vague, protection against an animal could mean the treat from a skunk. That's not self defense."* James Hayes, head of the Justice Department's task force on firearms. (Globe & Mail, 19 Mar 95, p A6).

Denying that guns are sometimes used for self-protection is absurd. If there is to be a debate, it should be on the relative merits of having a firearm for self-protection or not having one.

Given the Canadian legal climate it is not surprising that the police are not informed of the use of guns for self defense in the overwhelming majority of situations where the gun was not fired. To report such an incident is just asking to be charged with some offense. Given the complexity of the law neither a home owner nor the average police officer is likely to be sure whether the self defense was legal. Moreover, why would a geologist report to the police that she had fired her rifle to scare off a bear? Why would a farmer report to the police that he had fired a shotgun at coyotes who were menacing his sheep? Would the police bother to make a formal written report if they did? The wonder is that any incidents at all are reported.

Respondents were asked, "Within the last five years have you, yourself, or another member of your household used a gun, even if it was not fired, for self-protection or for the protection of property at home, work or elsewhere? Please do not include military service, police work or work as a security guard."

Q19. Within the last five years have you, yourself, or another member of your household used a gun, even if it was not fired, for self-protection or the protection of property at home, work or elsewhere? Please do not include military service, police work or work as a security guard.		
Responses	Number	Percent
Yes	31	2.1
No	1468	97.5
Don't Know	3	.2
Refused	3	.2
Total Responses	1,505	100.0

The figures reported here, and in subsequent tables, are from the un-weighted sample as it deals with a small number of discrete cases, not an attempt to estimate a national average.

Thirty-one respondents, 2.1% of the sample, said they had used a firearm for self-protection, three said they did not know, and three refused to answer. Those who responded "don't know" may have meant that they did not know if another member of their household had used a gun for self-protection, or they were unclear whether the use constituted self-protection. Two of the three who refused to answer also refused to answer whether or not they had a gun in their home, the other was a gun owner. These people are perhaps unsure of the legal status of their guns, or of their actions.

Defensive uses of firearms were reported in every region of Canada, but were somewhat higher in the western half of the country. It was more frequently reported in rural areas and big cities than in small and medium sized cities. Male respondents were somewhat more likely to report defensive use than female respondents. Younger people were slightly more likely to report defensive use than older people, higher income respondents somewhat more likely to report defensive use than lower income respondents. There was no consistent pattern by educational level.

In terms of attitudes, defensive use was more likely to be reported by those who feel that Canadians should have a right to own a gun, by those who have a gun in their home or are gun owners, by those who say they are "very" familiar with the law, by those who discuss firearms and gun control "frequently," by those who oppose registration, oppose confiscation of handguns, favour hunting, and think gun control ineffective.

Logically, it is unlikely that those without a gun in their home would have the opportunity to use a gun for self-protection. While the attitudinal correlations are clear, the direction of causality is not. Most of the self-protection users simply have the attitudes of most gun owners, but in some cases these attitudes may have been developed or reinforced after successful self-protection.

The next question was, "Was this to protect against an animal or person?"

IF Q19 (YES), ASK:		
Q20. Was this to protect against an animal or person?		
Responses	Number	Percent
Animal	19	61.3
Person	4	12.9
Both	1	3.2
Refused	7	22.6
Total Responses	31	100.0

A total of twenty uses against animals and five against person were acknowledged. The high level of refusals, seven, possibly reflects an unwillingness to discuss use against a person - more consequential from a legal point of view.

Protection from animals was principally reported in the West, with four instances in Ontario, ten in the Prairie provinces and six in British Columbia. Protection against persons was reported in Quebec and Ontario with two cases each, and one in British Columbia. Respondents in rural areas and in small and medium sized cities reported only use against animals, while all reports of use against persons came from respondents in big cities. Men were more likely to report use against animals than women (but most women may have been reporting on male use). Younger people were more likely to report use against a person than older respondents. Uses against persons were reported by middle and higher income respondents, almost all of who had college or some university education.

Finally, "Was it you who used a gun defensively or did someone else in your household do this?"

Q23. Was it you who used a gun defensively, or did someone else in your household do that?		
Responses	Number	Percent
Respondent	13	41.9
Someone else	12	38.7

Refused	6	19.4
Total Responses	31	100.0

No women reported having used a firearm for self-protection, they all said someone else had done so or refused to answer. Men mostly reported that they themselves had used a gun defensively, or refused to answer, with only two reporting that someone else in the household had been the user. A majority (8) of those who said they did not have a gun in their home said that another member of the household had used a gun for self-protection, while gun owners reported that they themselves had used a gun in seven of the eight reported cases.

Conclusions

A majority of Canadians say they would use a gun to defend themselves or their family from death or serious injury. Some have had to do so.

Three surveys (including this one) in Canada on the self defense use of firearms have found, within the range of sampling error, the same general results.(Mauser 96) While it is only a small percentage of households that report defensive use, there are over ten million households in Canada. By projecting the survey results to the total number of households, estimates of the total defensive use of firearms from the three studies range from 62,500 to 80,000 per year, and defense against persons from 19,000 to 37,500 per year. Whether the actual figures are at the lower or higher end of this range, they certainly exceed the 1,400 deaths inflicted by firearms every year.

How could so many Canadians use firearms in self defense without it becoming common knowledge? Self defense activity is basically invisible to government. There is no reason to report it, such as there is with property crimes or serious victimization.. This is especially true given that a firearm used in self defence is not discharged in three out of four occasions (Kleck and Gertz 95). Given the moral ambiguity of the act, both the defender and aggressor have strong reason not to report the incident. If someone used a firearm or other weapon, there may even be a motive not to report the incident, since there is a strong possibility that they would face legal charges for defending themselves. Finally, although medical doctors are required to report gun-shot wounds, the available statistics suggest that few self defense uses of firearms result in serious physical injury, so that there are few injuries that would require reporting (Kleck, 1991:116).

If anything, the survey estimates presented here of the number of people who use firearms in self defense are probably too low. A number of criminologists have shown that survey estimates of criminal and defensive gun uses have been underestimated (Kleck 1991)

These survey results show that firearms are used in Canada more often than many may believe in the defense of people and property. Indeed, Canadians use firearms defensively about half as often as Americans do, but tend to use firearms disproportionately against animal threats, not against human threats, as in the U.S. Of necessity, these estimates are only approximate, given the small sample sizes and the low incidence rates. However, the high level of agreement among the three samples of the general public in Canada provides strong support that firearms are used in Canada to protect people.

More research is needed to provide a firm estimate of how many Canadians use firearms to protect themselves or their families from violence. In addition, further research must be conducted into what respondents meant when they reported they had "used" a firearm in defense - did they shoot to kill, fire a warning shot or merely display the weapon? Given the sensitive nature of defensive use of firearms, it is possible that many respondents have concealed actual incidents so the true number may be even higher than reported here. It is even possible that some respondents may have included carrying or having the firearm available in case of an attack as an example of "use." The only way to answer these questions would be to study this issue by using a larger sample survey.

A larger sample size would enable researchers to understand what Canadians do to defend themselves in repelling animal and human threats. It would be particularly important to study defensive efforts to repel aggression by violent criminals, either in sexual assaults or armed robberies, and how effective these efforts are. Policy makers should know the frequency with which defensive weapons of all kinds are used in personal self defense in Canada.

If firearms are actually used in Canada to defend against either human or animal threats, then the private ownership of firearms may contribute significantly to public safety as well as pose a danger through firearms misuse. It is unknown how many lives are actually saved, but if a life were saved in only 5% of these incidents, then the private ownership of firearms would save more than 3,000 lives annually in Canada. This study shows that the private ownership of firearms has benefits for the Canadian public as well as costs. Additional firearms

legislation may not act to save lives as claimed, but may actually cost lives by rendering it difficult to obtain a firearm when one is needed.

Chapter 11. Politics

All public opinion polls have to be interpreted with some caution. Polls elicit opinions, and it takes a sophisticated study to determine how important or firmly held these opinions are to respondents. As a general rule people feel more strongly about things that affect them personally. There have been gun control referendums in the United States where polls indicated that the new law would pass but when the vote came it failed (Kleck 363). *"Some evidence suggests that pro-control opinion may be more weakly held than anti-control opinion. Gun control supporters, when asked in surveys about the intensity of their views, provide responses indicating that they hold their views about as strongly as do opponents. However, when researchers tested these claims by inquiring whether Respondentss actually did anything tangible to act on their opinions, such as writing a letter to a public official or giving money to an advocacy group, opponents were three times as likely to report doing something like this as were supporters (Schuman and Presser 1981, Kleck 364)"*

Kleck goes on to say, *"...gun owners make up the majority of gun control opponents, and gun owners believe themselves to have far more at stake personally in the gun control debate than non-owners. Those who own, enjoy and/or rely on guns believe they could personally lose something very valuable if restrictive gun control is implemented, either immediately or as a result of escalation in controls following initially moderate controls. On the other hand, most supporters could, at best, enjoy only the uncertain and collectively shared benefits of the less dangerous environment that might result from gun control. Concrete and immediate personal costs motivate behavior more strongly than abstract shared benefits that may or may not materialize sometime in the future, and this principle will operate regardless of whether there is an organization that is efficient at mobilizing gun owners."*

For the past decade, Canadians have tended to "vote the rascals out." Government after government has fallen because they made themselves unpopular with sections of the electorate. Winning parties have frequently assumed that they were chosen, and legislated on that assumption, rather than realizing that they were not so much selected as the previous government was rejected. They have discovered the error, frequently, in the next election.

Superficial readings of public opinion polls have been a key element in encouraging those in power to act arrogantly. Because the government enjoys a high level of general popularity, legislators feel that they can enact laws that discomfit segments of the population with impunity. This assumption is probably correct, once or twice, but as additional sectors of the population are annoyed the effect tends to be cumulative. Many public policies appear from polls to be popular with the voters in the abstract, but produce enormous resentment among some in the particular. Public opinion supports, or has supported, the return of the death penalty (69%, Angus Reid, *Montreal Gazette*, 10 Jul 95, p. A5), free trade, the GST, cuts to government services, reduction of the deficit, and gun control. When governments enact legislation on the basis of these general sentiments they often find that they have made implacable enemies in a significant portion of the population. The general support the government perceived is like a fog - it appears solid from afar, but very thin close in.

Gun control is an excellent example of the pitfalls encountered when governing by poll. Since few people know the current laws, and many are concerned by crime and the misuse of firearms, a majority is always in favour of "stricter" gun control. When new laws are enacted and have minimal effect on crime, violence, suicide or accidents, some will probably still be in favour of "stricter" gun control because nothing visible has happened. Others may become disillusioned as they come to realize that gun control does not produce the expected results. For the minority, who bear the burden of complying with the new laws, the laws are a constant irritant and reminder that they have been, in their view, singled out for discriminatory treatment. Few votes are swayed toward the government for enacting ineffective laws. Many, though not all, of those who have been burdened by the law will vote against the government that passed it. Only if all parties are equally strong in their support for the law will it have no electoral consequence.

Gun owners, being a small and not always unified segment of the population, do not by themselves decide elections. They can constitute a swing vote. In a multi-party democracy governments are frequently elected by a minority of the electors. The hostility of 15% of the population can be significant, if it is not countered by equivalent numbers who favour of the policy. The negative effects of stricter gun control for governing parties have been frequently noted, the positive effects rarely, if ever, noted.

Politicians who feel strongly that a policy is right, and that they are doing the statesmanlike thing in passing an unpopular law for the general good, may be vindicated by history. They may also destroy their party.

When this survey was taken in January 1995, elements of the gun control law, such as registration, were probably at the peak of their popularity. In the battle between the forces of good and evil, as cast by the media, the government was taking on the powerful gun lobby. Registration was to be cheap, simple and greatly desired by the Chiefs of Police. When the next election comes it will not be so popular. There will be financial burdens supported by all the taxpayers and (more significantly) by gun owners. The Chiefs may be heard to complain that they have not received the necessary resources, the media may have discovered some injustices in the application of the law, and there may be the perception that the law is ineffective.

Voting in the 1993 Federal Election

This analysis started by looking at the way people said they voted in the last federal election.

Q26. Which party did you vote for in the last federal election?		
Responses	Number	Percent
Liberal	491	32.6
Bloc Quebecois	88	5.8
Reform	102	6.8
NDP	85	5.6
Progressive Conservative	129	8.6
Other	26	1.7
Did not vote	267	17.7
Don't know/Refused	318	21.0
Total Responses	1,505	100.0

As this survey was not designed to focus exclusively on politics, only a few questions were asked, and there was no follow up (as in an electoral survey) to determine the "leaning" of people who refused to answer.

The regional distribution of the last vote is well known. The Liberals were strong in the Atlantic provinces and Ontario. The Bloc Quebecois was only strong in Quebec. Reform was strongest in the Prairie provinces and British Columbia. The Conservatives had a low level of support across the country, while the New Democrats only had real support in the West. The variations between rural and urban ridings, men and women, and different age groups were not particularly significant. As usual, people with lower incomes were less likely to vote at all, but when they did they were more likely to support the NDP than better off voters.

The Reform and Conservative parties were more likely to be supported by gun owners than non-gun owners, while the Liberals were more likely to be supported by non-gun owners. Those who "know" the gun law were more likely to have voted for Reform, and less likely to vote for the Liberal Party than those who do not know the law. Those who favoured "Right and Hunt" values were somewhat more likely to support the Reform and Conservative Parties, while those who oppose them were somewhat more likely to support the Liberals or the Bloc. The small number of respondents who spontaneously mentioned gun control as a method for reducing violent crime supported the Liberals. Those who think gun control ineffective were more likely to support the Reform Party, but there were no strong associations for the other parties. Interestingly, those who think gun control effective were significantly less likely to vote at all. The Liberals were slightly more likely to get the votes of those who favour registration, but these people were also least likely to vote. The Reform Party benefitted strongly from the votes of those who are opposed to registration. Of those who say they favour confiscating all handguns a remarkable 27% did not vote.

Importance of Gun Control

After respondents had spent 10 minutes or more answering up to 25 questions about firearms and gun control, they were asked, "When voting in a federal election, how important to you are the candidates' positions on gun control?" Obviously, even for people who had never given a thought to gun control, the issue had been made salient by the questionnaire. If the question had preceded all the others and been phrased, "what issues are important to you," the results would have approximated those in the first question on the "most important problem facing Canada," and economic issues would have been prevalent. Asked, as it was, after talking about gun control for several minutes, and with no competing issues having been raised, respondents naturally responded that gun control was an important issue.

Q27. When voting in a federal election, how important to you are the candidate's positions on gun control?		
Responses	Number	Percent
Very important	280	18.6
Somewhat important	557	37.0
Not very important	375	24.9
Not at all important	219	14.6
Don't Know	74	4.9
Total Responses	1,505	100.0

Given the bias created by the placement of the question, it was necessary to analyze differences between those who said that the candidates' positions on gun control were "very important" to them, versus those who said "somewhat," "not very," "not at all important," or "don't know." No doubt the question placement bias still exists - many who said "very important" might not have thought of it spontaneously. Yet, among those who said it was, there were some for whom it is really true.

Respondents in Ontario are most likely to say candidates' positions are "very important" (22%), and those in the Prairie provinces the least likely to say so (15%). People in rural and urban areas are slightly more likely to think it important than people in small and medium sized cities, but not significantly so. Women (20%) are slightly more likely to think it very important than men (17%), and older people (22%) are slightly more likely to think it important than younger people (17%). Respondents with less than high school levels of education (22%) are significantly more likely to think the candidates' position on gun control is very important, than are those who are university graduates (13%). Those with lower incomes (24%) are much more likely than those with higher incomes (15%) to think it very important.

Both those who strongly favour and those who strongly oppose hunting are more likely to think the candidates' position very important than those who are somewhat in favour or somewhat opposed to hunting. Those who say they are "very" familiar with the current law are considerably more likely (37%) to think it "very important" than those who are less familiar (17%). Those who spontaneously mentioned gun control as a method of reducing violent crime were also much more likely to say it was "very important" (29%) than those who did not mention gun control (18%). Both those who think gun control is effective, and those who think it ineffective, are more likely to think it very important than those who are not so certain. The same pattern is found concerning opinions on registration - those with strong opinions for and against it are both more likely to think it important than those who are "soft" on registration. Those who favour confiscating all handguns think gun control "very important" (26%). These results indicate that gun control is a polarizing issue which is important to those who feel strongly on both sides. In some ways it is similar to opinions on abortion.

Voting for Pro-Registration Candidates

In the last election Canadians did not get a chance to vote on firearms registration, it was not part of the platform of any of the parties. In the next election it is unlikely that they will get a chance to vote on it as an issue by itself. Individual candidates do not have much say in government policy, it is the party leadership that decides. Aside from ridings that are either very pro or very anti-registration a rational candidate will temporize, say ambiguous things that will not offend either side, and later claim that he or she had to support the party, tailoring the message to the specific audience. Thus the next question has to be considered hypothetical. Most Canadians will never be given a clear choice of options on registration to vote for or against. The question was also asked at a specific period in the debate when very optimistic projections of cost and ease ruled the day. How Canadians, in general, will react after the complexities become apparent (as happened with the Goods and Services Tax), is not predictable from responses to the question, "Would you be more inclined or less inclined to vote for a candidate who favoured registering all firearms?" The reaction of those who will have to register their guns is somewhat more predictable.

Q28. Would you be more inclined or less inclined to vote for a candidate who favoured registering all firearms?		
Responses	Number	Percent
More Inclined	774	51.5
Less Inclined	233	15.5
The Same	415	27.6

Don't Know	83	5.5
Total Responses	1,505	100.0

Overall, a slim majority (51%) say they would be more inclined to vote for a candidate who favours registration. This is highest (56%) in Ontario, and lowest in the Prairie provinces (42%). People in large cities are significantly more likely to say they would vote for such a candidate (58%) than are people in rural areas (44%). Women (56%) are more likely to say they would vote for such a candidate than are men (47%). Almost twice as many men (20%) would vote against such a candidate as women (11%). Younger people are significantly more likely to say they would vote for such a candidate (62%) than older people (42%). Older people are more than twice as likely to say they would vote against such a candidate (22%) than younger people (10%). People with less than high school education are less likely to vote for, and more likely to vote against such a candidate than are people with more education.

Though most Canadians will never get the chance to vote for or against registration as an isolated issue, it is likely that those who favour it for largely intellectual reasons, will not be inclined to vote for a candidate who supported registration. Those who oppose it have more visceral and personal reasons to vote against such a candidate.

Voting on Handgun Confiscation

Confiscation of private property is not popular with Canadians. While few understand the process of "confiscation-in-place" used in the Criminal Code through prohibition and grandfathering, the idea of confiscation itself is repugnant to many.

Q29. Would you be more inclined or less inclined to vote for a candidate who favoured confiscating handguns from their lawful owners?		
Responses:	Number	Percent
More inclined	403	26.8
Less inclined	654	43.5
The same	338	22.4
Don't know	110	7.3
Total Responses	1,505	100.0

Overall, about a quarter of Canadians said they would be more inclined to vote for a candidate who favoured confiscating handguns, while 43% said they would be less inclined.

Only in Quebec do more people say they would more inclined to vote for a candidate who favoured confiscation (31%) than say they would vote against (26%). Confiscation is more popular in large cities, opposition is more concentrated in rural areas. A majority of men (52%) oppose confiscation, while fewer women (36%) do. Still, more women would be less inclined to vote for a candidate who favoured confiscation (36%) than would be inclined to vote for such a candidate (31%). Younger people are more inclined to vote for, and older people more inclined to vote against a candidate who favoured confiscating handguns. High income respondents are significantly more likely to vote against a candidate who favoured confiscation (47%), than are lower income respondents (37%).

Gun owners, obviously, are not in favour of confiscation, but only 29% of non-gun owners would be more inclined to vote for a candidate who favoured it. Of those with "Right and Hunt" values, 63% would vote against a candidate who favoured confiscation, while 49% of those with "No Right No Hunt" values would support such a candidate. A majority of those who are "very" familiar with the law (69%) would be less inclined to vote for a candidate who favoured confiscating handguns.

Those opposed to registration would vote against confiscation, while only a minority (41%) of those who favour registration under any scenario would be inclined to support such a candidate. Those who think gun control ineffective would be less inclined to vote for a candidate who favoured confiscation (68%), while among those who think it effective only 45% would be more inclined to vote for such a candidate. Obviously those who favour confiscating all handguns would vote for such a candidate (73%), while those who oppose confiscation would vote against (62%). Confiscation of handguns is an exceptionally divisive issue.

Values, Perceived Effectiveness, and Strength of Vote Intention

In order to see how strongly respondents would support or oppose a candidate who favoured registration or confiscation, the questions on the importance of gun control and voting intentions were combined. If a respondent said they would be less inclined to vote for a candidate who favoured registration (or confiscation) they were categorized as "ANTI". If they said the candidate's position was "very" important they were categorized as "VERY ANTI"; "somewhat" important were listed as "SOME ANTI", and "not very important," "not at all important," and "Don't know" responses were grouped as "LEAN ANTI." Those who said the candidate's position on registration (or confiscation) would not influence their vote, or who did not know if it would make a difference, were categorized as "NEUTRAL," regardless of how important they thought the candidate's position on gun control was. The "PRO" responses were categorized in the same way as the "ANTI".

Creation of Indices of Strength of Support Towards Candidates who Support Registration or Confiscation						
	Q 27. When voting in a federal election, how important to you are the candidate's positions on gun control?			Q 28. Would you be more inclined or less inclined to vote for a candidate who favoured registering all firearms (confiscating handguns)		
Support Index	Very	Somewhat	Not & DK	Less	Same & DK	More
Very Anti	X			X		
Some Anti		X		X		
Lean Anti			X	X		
Neutral	X	X	X		X	
Lean Pro			X			X
Some Pro		X				X
Very Pro	X					X

Two separate indices of Strength of Attitude were created, one based on responses to the registration question, the other on responses to the confiscation question. These were then analyzed to see what effect basic values and the perceived effectiveness of gun control would have on voting intentions in the two cases. Within all categories of basic values, for both indices, the perceived effectiveness of gun control was strongly and significantly correlated with voting intentions. Those who perceived gun control as ineffective would vote against candidates who support either registration or confiscation, those who perceived gun control as effective would vote for such candidates.

Strength of Attitude towards Candidates who Support Registration, by Perceived Effectiveness, by Basic Values					
Basic values	Strength of attitude toward candidate:	Perceived Effectiveness of Stricter Gun Control			
		Not Effective	Neutral	Is Effective	Total Percent
Right and Hunt	Very Anti	17%	2%	4%	9%
	Some Anti	11%	5%	1%	7%
	Lean Anti	16%	11%	1%	11%
	Neutral	34%	39%	23%	34%
	Lean Pro	11%	14%	17%	13%
	Some Pro	7%	22%	30%	16%
	Very Pro	4%	8%	24%	9%
	Col%	100%	*101%	100%	*99%
	Row% n =	45%	40%	16%	*101%
Mixed	Very Anti	2%	2%	1%	2%
	Some Anti	10%	3%	2%	4%
	Lean Anti	10%	4%	4%	6%
	Neutral	50%	42%	22%	37%
	Lean Pro	13%	19%	13%	16%
	Some Pro	12%	20%	37%	24%
	Very Pro	3%	9%	21%	12%
	Col%	100%	100%	100%	*101%

	Row%	22%	44%	34%	100%
	n =	131	270	208	609
No Right, No Hunt	Very Anti	0%	2%	3%	2%
	Some Anti	3%	3%	0%	2%
	Lean Anti	3%	3%	1%	2%
	Neutral	46%	27%	18%	25%
	Lean Pro	22%	26%	12%	19%
	Some Pro	19%	28%	45%	35%
	Very Pro	8%	11%	21%	16%
	Col%	100%	100%	100%	*101%
	Row%	10%	43%	47%	100%
	n =	37	158	174	369
Total Responses	Row%	27%	42%	31%	100%
Total Responses	n =	405	637	465	**1,507

* Totals may not equal 100% because of rounding.

** Total Number of Cases may not equal 1,505 because of weighting.

Strength of Attitude towards Candidates who Support Confiscation of handguns, by Perceived Effectiveness, by Basic Values					
Basic values	Strength of attitude toward candidate:	Perceived Effectiveness of Stricter Gun Control			
		Not Effective	Neutral	Is Effective	Total Percent
Right and Hunt	Very Anti	22%	7%	13%	14%
	Some Anti	20%	23%	18%	21%
	Lean Anti	37%	24%	13%	28%
	Neutral	15%	29%	31%	23%
	Lean Pro	3%	7%	17%	5%
	Some Pro	2%	9%	30%	6%
	Very Pro	1%	3%	24%	3%
	Col%	100%	*102%	*99%	*100%
	Row%	45%	40%	16%	*101%
	n =	236	208	83	527
Mixed	Very Anti	5%	4%	5%	5%
	Some Anti	24%	13%	16%	16%
	Lean Anti	31%	20%	11%	20%
	Neutral	31%	39%	30%	34%
	Lean Pro	5%	6%	7%	6%
	Some Pro	2%	11%	18%	12%
	Very Pro	0%	6%	14%	7%
	Col%	*98%	*99%	*101%	101%
	Row%	22%	45%	34%	*101%
	n =	131	271	207	609
No Right, No Hunt	Very Anti	3%	1%	3%	2%
	Some Anti	5%	10%	0%	7%
	Lean Anti	16%	16%	1%	10%
	Neutral	45%	37%	18%	32%
	Lean Pro	16%	13%	12%	11%
	Some Pro	16%	14%	45%	24%
	Very Pro	0%	10%	21%	13%
	Col%	*101%	*101%	100%	*99%
	Row%	10%	43%	47%	100%
	n =	38	158	174	370
Total Responses	Row%	27%	42%	31%	100%
Total Responses	n =	405	637	465	**1,506

- * Totals may not equal 100% because of rounding.
- ** Total Number of Cases may not equal 1,505 because of weighting.

Given these results it is quite clear that the "effectiveness myth" underlies political support for gun control. If C-68 is seen as not producing significant reductions in violent deaths, then a significant reduction in support for gun control can be anticipated. It may well be that the principal reduction will be among the "Right and Hunt" and "Mixed" value positions; those with "No Right No Hunt" values may call for even stronger measures, such as total confiscation of firearms.

Conclusions

At the time the survey was administered, the idea of registration was popular. Now the response of many of those who supported it is likely to be, "thanks, but what have you done for me lately?" The response of those who have to comply with it is likely to be a vote for a candidate who will get rid of registration.

Confiscation is clearly a losing issue. C-68 has already infuriated about a half million Canadians and the numbers are growing. Also, citizens are becoming relatively inured to political obfuscation and it tends to affect their voting habits; C-68 may prove to be indefensible.

The perceived effectiveness of gun control was found to be the basis of political support for gun control legislation. Should the new law come to be perceived as ineffective a dramatic reversal in public support is a possible result.

Chapter 12 - Conclusions

C-68 radically changed the firearms legislation in Canada. The Justice Minister has claimed that the public strongly backs these legal changes, and cited public opinion polls to back up his claims. But other than media polls, public support for this law has been surprisingly modest.

Very few Canadians were familiar with the legislation existing before C-68. Even requirements that have been in place since the 1970s are unknown to many people. The result was that opinions about the effectiveness of further gun control legislation were based almost entirely upon wishful thinking.

The introduction of draconian legislation, such as C-68, needlessly exacerbates deep divisions within Canadian society and threatens to undermine public support for the police and law and order itself. C-68 gives breath-taking powers to government. Universal firearms registration, for example, requires a bureaucratic system of staggering complexity. Many citizens, who would otherwise be respected members of their community, will get criminal records for failing to comply with a complex and intrusive set of regulations.

Values played an important, though often denied, role in the gun control debate. If a person has anti-gun values they are likely to support anything called gun control, if they have pro-gun values they are likely to resist anything called gun control.

A segment of the population would like to see all guns disappear from Canada, and the world, and arguments of recreational use and wildlife management are meaningless to them. While the official spokespersons for this viewpoint often say, as a tactic, that they do not want to ban hunting guns, their actions belie their words. Certainly many of their supporters would like to see the practice of hunting ended. Another segment of the population, those who lawfully own and use firearms find the views of the first group incomprehensible. A majority, 58% of the respondents with an opinion, think that Canadians should have the right to own a firearm. A minority, 42% of those with an opinion disagree, often strongly. Overall, 55% of the respondents favour hunting and 45% are opposed.

From the "No Right No Hunt" point of view the goal of gun control is to reduce the number of firearms in the country, to reduce firearms use, and to reduce hunting. If firearms and hunting could be eliminated from Canada, even better.

Two basic value conflicts in the gun control debate are over the right to own firearms and opinions on hunting. When these two positions are combined into a single measure the outlines of the value conflict become clear. On one side we have central Canadian urbanites, females, and non-gun owners. On the other side are those from the "hinterlands," rural and suburban residents, males, and gun owners. While it is possible to find a non-gun owning woman in Montreal who supports the right to own a firearm and favours hunting, or a male gun owner from the rural prairies who thinks no one should have the right to own a gun or hunt, they are exceptions.

There are probably a few hundred people in Canada who have a reasonably comprehensive grasp of current firearm control legislation - none of the respondents in this survey appear to be among them. The discrepancy between a basically uninformed public which calls for ever increasing restrictions on firearms, and increasingly informed gun-owners guarantees conflict. Value conflicts are rarely resolved by legislation, but a successful attempt by one side to outlaw the other side can produce extreme responses when people feel the political system no longer works for them.

If one were to ask Canadians if they think that crime and violence is a problem, many would agree. When they are asked for their perception of the "most important" problem facing Canada, few think of crime and violence. It is a matter of attention and direction. Respondents may not have been thinking of crime, but when directly asked about it they will express an opinion.

Some 45% of Canadians think that violent crime has increased a great deal in the last ten years, an additional 35% think it has increased somewhat, so 80% believe crime has increased. Less than 20% think it has stayed the same, decreased, or say they do not know.

A majority of those with recorded opinions, 28% of respondents, favoured changes in the justice system to reduce violent crime. Increasing education and reducing violence on television appealed to 15%, while various forms of gun control attracted only 4% of the suggestions. More than twice as many respondents called for bringing back capital punishment than suggested more gun control laws.

Only one Canadian in twenty sees crime and violence as the major problem facing Canada, but four of five think that crime has increased. Only one Canadian out of twenty spontaneously suggested more gun control measures to reduce violent crime; more than one out of four suggested changes to the justice system instead.

As most respondents do not know what the present laws are, it is hard to know what they mean when they call for "stricter" laws. Presumably what people mean when they call for "gun control" is control of misuse, though for some with "No Right No Hunt" values "gun control" may mean eliminating all guns.

Of the respondents who had an opinion, 58% say that stricter regulations for authorized firearms owners would not lower the violent crime rate. Overall, more than three out of four Canadians think that criminals will be able to get guns in spite of restrictive laws. Of the respondents with an opinion, 54% do not think stricter gun control would be effective in reducing the level of violence against women in Canada. Throughout Canada, barring Quebec, a majority believe stricter regulations would be ineffective in reducing suicide. A substantial majority of the respondents think stricter regulations will reduce homicide, but there is a curious contradiction: In the same interview, one third of the sample responds that stricter gun control will not be effective in reducing violent crime, but will be effective in reducing homicide. Overall, of those who had opinions, 77% think stricter regulations would be effective in reducing accidents, while 23% do not.

The basic values - attitudes about the right to own firearms and go hunting - were the most important determinants of the respondent's perceptions of the effectiveness of stricter gun control. The opinions people express about legislative proposals appear to be rational, in most cases, because they believe that they will be effective. The assumptions of effectiveness are largely determined by basic value assumptions, rather than an analysis of evidence.

The Parliament of Canada, in Law C-68, has now mandated universal registration. Various rationales for registration have been advanced: registration will make owners more responsible, encourage them to store their firearms safely; allow the police to enforce prohibition orders and take guns from dangerous individuals; and will let the police know what they face in hostage taking situations. Yet, if all firearms in Canada were actually to be registered (that is, if compliance were to be near 100%), there might be some instances in which the police would find the data useful. Compliance, however, is likely to be at a lower level overall, and still lower among the most troublesome members of Canadian society.

In all public opinion research, a distinction must be made between mass opinion and public judgement. In an abstract way almost everyone agrees that poverty should be reduced. On the other hand, when it comes to taking money from their pay check to do it, most realize that public issues always involve trade-offs. This is also true with registering firearms. A good idea, so long as it does not involve any cost or inconvenience, not quite so good an idea when one realizes that it will cost a fair amount of money and tie up a number of police officers in paperwork. Support for universal firearm registration declined in every situation where costs or trade-offs had to be considered. The greater the cost and reduction in public services, the less the support.

In general, those who think gun control effective are more likely than those who think it ineffective to support universal registration. There are, however, some people who favour registration and confiscation whether or not they think gun control is effective.

Overall, support and opposition to universal firearms registration is a reflection of individual values. Those who would like to see a future Canada without guns support registration regardless of whether they really believe it will be effective, and regardless of the cost. The majority, who are not ideologues, are more concerned with costs and trade-offs. Those who support the right to own firearms, or favour hunting, or are gun-owners are least likely to support registration, though many of them would do so if they thought that it would provide worthwhile results.

For universal firearm registration to do anything beyond harassing gun-owners, there must be a high level of compliance. If there is a low level of compliance, the police will not be able to use the data with any certainty. Gun owners can not be coerced into "safe storage." Unregistered stolen guns will not be reported to the police. Without nearly absolute compliance, millions of guns will only be able to be sold on the grey (not registered, for non-criminal use) or black (not registered, for criminal use) markets.

The values driving the registration debate are deeply felt, but not often discussed. For some of the people who support universal registration it is only a step toward the elimination of all firearms. For others, it is a public policy they believe will produce benefits, worthwhile so long as the costs are not too high. Those who oppose registration often see the costs, which they will likely wind up paying, as greater than the benefits. It is important to realize that the depth of feeling, while great at both extremes, is more personal for the gun owner.

The strongest proponents of registration are those who think Canadians should not have a right to own a firearm. For many of them matters of cost and trade-offs are irrelevant. Whether or not it will be effective is irrelevant. They feel it to be a moral decision, something like the prohibition of alcohol used to be. They rarely have a personal stake in the law. It is not their property which will be prohibited, and it will not produce any direct benefit to them in most cases. They will probably not be completely satisfied with any law which allows anyone in Canada to continue owning a gun. It is safe to predict that passage of Law C-68 is not the end of the conflict, but the beginning of a wider conflict between government and gun owners.

There is some question whether Canadian citizens have any property rights. They are not mentioned in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, but are a tradition of British Common Law. Traditionally, compensation is paid for property taken by the government. If the government confiscated a million registered handguns, which, conservatively, are worth \$300 each on average, the total payment to gun owners would be in the range of a third of a billion dollars, not counting legal and administrative costs. This has led the government to its "confiscation in place" policy of "grandfathering" categories of current owners. The owners are stripped of many of their property rights, they can only sell to other owners in the same category, on their deaths the guns will be confiscated - no compensation need be paid.

According to the Coalition for Gun Control, 71% of Canadians support a complete ban on handguns for civilian use. But does the public support the measures that would be necessary to achieve such a prohibition? We asked whether the handguns of collectors, target shooters, and those who had them for self-defense should be confiscated. Only a minority of respondents said "yes." About three out of four respondents said that collectors' handguns should not be confiscated, an additional 5% said they did not know. Three quarters of the respondents do not favour confiscating the handguns of target shooters. Only a minority of the respondents favour the idea of confiscating self-defense handguns.

Overall, 45% of the respondents did not support confiscating any handguns, 41% supported confiscating handguns from one or two types of users, and 13% supported confiscating from all three types of users. This result stands in remarkable contradiction to the findings of the Coalition for Gun Control Survey which found that 71% of Canadians favoured entirely prohibiting handguns for civilians. When Canadians are asked to make a "public judgement," rather than expressing a "mass opinion," support for prohibiting all handguns drops from 71% to 13%.

Many people "wish" all handguns would go away, just as many wish for a world without war, injustice, or poverty. When it comes to making a judgement about actually seizing someone's property, other values become relevant.

No one knows how many firearms or firearms owners there are in Canada. Estimates range from six million to over twenty million firearms. Every method of estimating these figures has serious flaws. Universal registration will not improve these estimates greatly because it will be widely ignored and evaded, as this study has shown will be the case, and as handgun registration has been ignored and evaded since 1934.

Neither the survey interviewer nor the respondent may know whether something is a firearm. The old flintlock over the mantle is only a firearm if the owner intends to discharge it. The boy's air-gun in the closet is a "firearm" only if it shoots a pellet at over 152.4 meters per second, under the Criminal Code definition.

There are numerous reasons a respondent may have for not telling an interviewer about the firearms in their household. They may not think of the old shotgun or unregistered pistol in the attic when the interviewer asks. They may not know it is there. They may be totally uninterested in firearms; or they may be the hobby of another member of the household. They may fear that telling an unknown telephone interviewer is an invitation to burglary. They may feel that it is nobody's business to know that they have guns. They may fear that their ownership may become known to the police and they will be forced to register. They may be uncertain of the legal status of their firearms - as most Canadians currently are.

This survey found a serious discrepancy in the number of married males and married females reporting a gun in their home. It is probably not only married women who under-report, this is just the one area in which comparison can be made. Additional suggestive evidence that under-reporting is not limited to married women comes from Alan Lizotte reporting on the Rochester Youth Development Study where 27.2% of boys and 16.8% of girls reported a gun in their parent's home.

One of the serious drawbacks of the 1991 Department of Justice/Angus Reid survey of firearms ownership, on which the government's estimate of firearms depends, is that they used a screening question and only interviewed people who acknowledged firearm ownership. In this study our principal focus was on the attitudes of the Canadian population, not specifically on estimating the firearms stock in the country, so we interviewed everyone in the sample. This allows us to know the demographic and attitudinal characteristics of those who refused to answer the question about their households' gun ownership.

In Reid's 1991 survey, 23% of the households were found to own firearms. We also found 23% of the households acknowledged owning firearms. When we make adjustments for the under-reporting by married women and the "refusers", we calculate that at least 28.5% of the households in Canada have firearms. This is a minimal estimate, 24% higher overall than Reid's estimate. We have not taken into account under-reporting by anyone except married women and "refusers", because we do not have the data to do so. Undoubtedly more under-reporting exists and more than 28.5% of Canadian households have guns.

The "main" reason for owning firearms in Canada is hunting. A strong majority of respondents in rural areas are favourable towards hunting, as a majority of big city respondents are opposed to it. This difference in attitudes is an underlying, but seldom mentioned, value conflict that drives much of the "gun control" debate. As urban regions gain ever more ascendancy in political calculations and media reportage, urban values come to dominate political discussion in many subject areas, not least of which is gun control.

There appear to be considerably more firearms and firearms owners in Canada than was estimated by previous surveys. Many of these unacknowledged firearms are in the hands of people who refuse to acknowledge ownership and who are consequently likely to resist registration and other attempts to regulate them.

Self defense is a troublesome right. Canadians typically view the debate on self protection as one that is restricted to the United States. The prevailing attitude is that there is no need for self defense in Canada - our superior social systems have eliminated these problems. It should come as no surprise that there are surprisingly few organized groups that officially support self defense, even in principle, or that teach it in any form. Talk show hosts discuss "violence against women" for hours without mentioning the possibility that women might use physical force to defend against assault or rape them. Not only do the police actively discourage armed self defense, but it is widely considered illegal. Exceptionally few Canadian organizations argue that citizens have the right to defend themselves with weapons.

Self defense is a right that is severely circumscribed by more conditions than are typically found in the United States. A wide range of self defensive weapons (eg, Mace, pepper spray, small handguns, tasers and stun guns) are prohibited, and ownership of these is punishable by up to 10 years imprisonment. For all practical purposes, it has been impossible to legally own a handgun for self protection since 1977. Recent firearms legislation now requires firearms to not only be unloaded when stored in one's residence but must also be put under lock and key. Judging from newspaper reports, many of those who use a firearm to defend themselves, are charged with one or more criminal violations - unsafe storage, careless use of firearm, or possession of a prohibited weapon - and then they have to prove in court that the firearm had been used in self defense.

Do Canadians really believe that they should be passive victims when faced with death? Is the legal culture created by Parliament an accurate reflection of Canadian thinking? Or, as in the debate over capital punishment, where the public overwhelmingly supports it and Parliament forbids it, is the "liberal" political elite imposing their view of probity on Canadian society? Sixty percent of the respondents said they would defend themselves with a firearm. A majority (54%) of those who wanted to confiscate the self-defense handguns of other people would use a gun for self defense if they themselves were threatened.

Perhaps those who say they would personally use guns they favour confiscating from everyone else have not worked through the logic of their position. Perhaps they have never considered that they, themselves, might be in a situation in which a gun could be a lifesaver - although being untrained, they would probably be quite dangerous with a gun in their hands. These inconsistencies do, however, provide an interesting insight into the depth of thought that goes into much of the gun control rhetoric.

Denying that guns are sometimes used for self-protection is absurd. If there is to be a debate it should be on the relative merits of having a firearm for self-protection or not having one, under Canadian law, in differing circumstances.

Given the Canadian legal climate it is not surprising that the police are not informed of the use of guns for self defense in the overwhelming majority of situations where the gun was not fired. To report such an incident is to ask to be charged with some offense. Given the complexity of the law, neither a home owner nor the average police officer is likely to be sure whether an act of self defense was legal. Moreover, why would a geologist report to the police that she had fired her rifle to scare off a bear? A majority of Canadians say they would use a gun to defend themselves or their family from death or serious injury. Some have had to do so.

How could so many Canadians use firearms in self defense without it having become common knowledge before this? Self defense activity is basically invisible to government. First, there is no reason to report it, such as there is with property crimes or serious victimization. Given the moral ambiguity of the act, both the defender and aggressor have strong reason not to report the incident. If the defender used a firearm or other weapon to defend him or herself, there may even be a motive not to report the incident, since there is a strong possibility of facing legal charges for defending him or herself. Finally, even though medical doctors are required to report gun-shot wounds, the available statistics suggest that few self defense uses of firearms result in serious physical harm, so that there are few injuries that would require reporting (Kleck, 1991, pp).

As a general rule people feel more strongly about things that affect them personally. There have been gun control referendums in the United States where the polls indicated that the new law would pass, but when the vote came it failed. Gun owners are a small and seldom unified segment of the population and do not, by themselves, decide elections. They can constitute a swing vote. In a multi-party democracy, where governments are frequently elected by a minority of the electors the hostility of 10% of the population can be significant, if it is not countered by an incremental 10% who support the policy. The negative effects of stricter gun control for governing parties have been frequently noted, but the positive effects are rarely, if ever, noted.

It is quite clear that the "effectiveness myth" underlies political support for gun control. If the new gun control measures come to be seen as not having produced significant reductions in homicides, suicides and accidents a significant loss of support for gun control can be anticipated. It may well be that the principal reduction will be among the "Right and Hunt" and "Mixed" value positions; those with "No Right No Hunt" values may call for even stronger measures, such as total confiscation of firearms.

If registration is enacted as passed the response of many of those who supported it is likely to be, "thanks, but what have you done for me lately?" The response of those who have to comply with it is likely to be a vote for a candidate who will get rid of registration.

Confiscation is clearly a losing issue. If the handgun prohibitions and confiscation-in-place contained in Law C-68 are enforced about a half million Canadians will be infuriated, and millions more will anticipate that they will be next. Even those who favour confiscation may well ask, "if these guns are dangerous why are you leaving them with their owners?"

Appendix A - Text of Questions in the 1995 Gun-Control Survey.

Q1. In your opinion, what is the most important problem facing Canada today?

Q2. Would you say that violent crime has increased, decreased or stayed the same in Canada over the past ten years? Would you say it has (READ LIST).

Q3. What do you think should be done about reducing violent crime?

Q4. How familiar would you say you are with the present Canadian firearms laws? Would you say you are (READ LIST).

Q5. If a Canadian who has never owned a firearm wants to buy a rifle or shotgun for the first time, can they go to a store and buy it or do they have to do something first?

Q6. IF Q5 (DO SOMETHING ELSE FIRST), ASK: OTHERS TO Q7

What do they have to do? (PROBE UNTIL UNPRODUCTIVE)

Q7. What is the maximum penalty in Canada for having a handgun that is not registered with the police?

Q8. blank

Q9. How often do you discuss the subject of firearms or gun control in Canada with your friends, relatives or co-workers? Would you say (READ LIST)

Q10. If there were stricter regulations for authorized firearms owners, would you say that the violent crime rate would increase, decrease or stay the same? (CLARIFY: Do you think it would increase/decrease a great deal or somewhat?)

Q11.1 Do you agree or disagree that Gun control laws affect only law-abiding citizens as criminals will always be able to get firearms? (CLARIFY: Is that strongly or somewhat?) (READ LIST)

Q11.2 Do you agree or disagree that Stricter gun control would greatly reduce the level of violence against women in Canada? (CLARIFY: Is that strongly or somewhat?) (READ LIST)

Q11.3 Do you agree or disagree that All firearms should be registered? (CLARIFY: Is that strongly or somewhat?) (READ LIST)

Q11.4 Do you agree or disagree that possession of handguns should be forbidden to everyone except authorized individuals? (CLARIFY: Is that strongly or somewhat?) (READ LIST) Note: This question was dropped from the analysis because of ambiguity.

Q11.5 Do you agree or disagree that Canadian Citizens should have the right to own a firearm? (CLARIFY: Is that strongly or somewhat?) (READ LIST)

IF Q11.3 (AGREE STRONGLY OR SOMEWHAT TO ALL FIREARMS SHOULD BE REGISTERED), ASK: OTHERS TO Q13

Q12.1 If it would cost \$100 million over the next five years to set up and maintain a firearms registry, would you still (AGREE STRONGLY OR SOMEWHAT) that all firearms should be registered? (CLARIFY: Is that - (READ LIST)

Q12.2 If it would cost \$500 million, would you still (AGREE STRONGLY OR SOMEWHAT) that all firearms should be registered? (CLARIFY: Is that - (READ LIST)

Q12.3 If you knew it would increase your taxes, would you still (AGREE STRONGLY OR SOMEWHAT) that all firearms should be registered? (CLARIFY: Is that - (READ LIST)

Q12.4 If you knew the police were opposed to registration, would you still (AGREE STRONGLY OR SOMEWHAT) that all firearms should be registered? (CLARIFY: Is that - (READ LIST)

Q12.5 If registration would force the police to pull constables off the streets in order to deal with the paper work involved, would you still (AGREE STRONGLY OR SOMEWHAT) that all firearms should be registered? (CLARIFY: Is that - (READ LIST)

Q13 Many Canadians have police permits to possess handguns for collecting, target shooting and self-defense purposes.

Q13.1 Do you think that Collectors handguns should be confiscated? (CLARIFY: Is that - (READ LIST)

Q13.2 Do you think that Target shooters handguns should be confiscated? (CLARIFY: Is that - (READ LIST)

Q13.3 Do you think that people who own handguns for self-defense should have their guns confiscated? (CLARIFY: Is that - (READ LIST)

Q14.1 How effective do you think stricter regulations would be in Reducing suicides? Would you say - (READ LIST)

Q14.2 How effective do you think stricter regulations would be in Reducing homicides? Would you say - (READ LIST)

Q14.3 How effective do you think stricter regulations would be in Reducing accidents? Would you say - (READ LIST)

Q15. Are there firearms of any kind in your home or garage?

IF Q15 (YES) ASK: OTHERS TO Q19

Q16.1 Are there any Shotguns?

Q16.2 Are there any Rifles?

Q16.3 Are there any Handguns?

Q16.4 What is the main reason your household has firearms? (READ LIST)

Q17. Do any of these firearms belong to you personally?

Q17.1 How many people in this household personally own firearms?

Q18. If the government's proposal to register all firearms becomes law, do you plan on registering all, some, or none of your firearms?

Q19. Within the last five years have you, yourself, or another member of your household used a gun, even if it was not fired, for self-protection or for the protection of property at home, work or elsewhere? Please do not include military service, police work or work as a security guard.

IF Q19 (YES), ASK: OTHERS TO Q24

Q20. Was this to protect against an animal or person?

Q21. How many incidents involving defensive uses of guns against persons happened to yourself or members of your household in the past five years?

Q22. Did this incident or any of these incidents happen in the past 12 months?

Q23. Was it you who used a gun defensively or did someone else in your household do this?

Q24. If you or your family were threatened with death or serious injury by an aggressor and you had access to a firearm, would you use it to defend yourself or not? Would that be definitely or probably?

Q25. Do you generally favour or oppose hunting? Is that strongly or somewhat?

Q26. Which party did you vote for in the last federal election?

Q27. When voting in a federal election, how important to you are the candidates' positions on gun control?

Q28. Would you be more inclined or less inclined to vote for a candidate who favoured registering all firearms? (CLARIFY: Would you be... (READ LIST)

Q29. Would you be more inclined or less inclined to vote for a candidate who favoured confiscating handguns from their lawful owners? (CLARIFY: Would you be... (READ LIST)

And now just a few more questions for classification purposes.

Q30. What is your age?

Q31. What is the highest level of formal education you have reached? (DO NOT READ LIST)

Q32. What is your marital status?

Q33. What is your total household income, from all sources, before taxes? Is it under \$50,000 or over?

IF Q33 (UNDER \$50,000), ASK:

Q34. Is that - (READ LIST)

IF Q33 (OVER \$50,000), ASK

Q35. Is that - (READ LIST)

[Thank you for your time. Goodbye.

Q36. (GENDER) RECORD SEX OF RESPONDENT.

Q37. (GENDER) ENTER INTERVIEWER GENDER.

Q38. (LANG) RECORD LANGUAGE IN WHICH INTERVIEW WAS CONDUCTED.

Backgrounds of the authors

Both authors are American immigrants to Canada and firearms enthusiasts. Gary Mauser has lived in Canada for over 22 years and Taylor Buckner has for over 29 years. Taylor Buckner lives in Quebec and Gary Mauser lives in BC.

Professor Gary Mauser has over 25 years of experience in conducting survey research studies of public opinion. He has written two books and more than 30 publications in criminology, political science, psychology, and marketing. Taylor Buckner has 35 years of experience in survey research, much of it dealing with attitudes towards minorities and anti-semitism. His training in survey research took place at the Survey Research Center of the University of California at Berkeley. He has published two books and presented or published more than 25 papers on the police, heterosexual transvestites, rumour transmission, anti-semitism, attitudes toward minorities, and many other subjects.

Gary Mauser: I was born and raised in California, but purchased my first firearm in Canada after becoming a citizen. I left California in 1971 for France, where I spent three years teaching at the University of Grenoble. After a year in New Orleans, I immigrated to Canada in 1974 to accept a job at Simon Fraser University. Except for a year as a Visiting Professor at Laval University in Quebec City, I've lived in B.C. ever since.

I became interested in firearms after I'd been in Canada for almost ten years. In 1983, I had just turned forty, and it was time to reconcile with my father. We had been estranged since I was a teenager. This meant picking up a war-surplus Mauser rifle my father had given me as a birthday present almost 20 years earlier. At the time, I'd refused to accept it. I couldn't have cared less about rifles, history, or even my family name [Mauser-designed military small arms have been used around the World from the 1840s to the present day- ed]. To bring the rifle back to Canada, I had to learn the laws relating to firearms. Unfortunately, I didn't know anything about rifles or Canadian gun laws, but soon discovered just how much there was to know!

Once I got the old Mauser rifle home, I wondered what it was. Who had used this rifle and why? That got me interested in history, particularly that of firearms development, military strategy, and Canadian history. I also began to wonder, what's it like to shoot a rifle? Once at a rifle range, my intellectual journey really got under way. Besides target shooting, I became interested in gunsmithing, handloading, and hunting. Finally, I became interested in the politics of gun control and the sociology of gun ownership. Who uses firearms? Who doesn't? Who is afraid of firearms? Why do governments campaign against firearms ownership rather than doing something constructive to reduce criminal violence?

Taylor Buckner: I was born in Kentucky, was on the high-school rifle team briefly, hunted once with my father, did my compulsory military service, joined the Oakland, California Police Department (where I became interested in gun control), which became the source of my Doctoral dissertation. I moved to Canada in 1967 to take a job at Sir George Williams (now Concordia) University. During the twenty years I lived in downtown Montreal I was not involved with guns at all, though I had a shotgun my grandmother gave me as a high school graduation present sitting in the closet.

In 1987, I bought a 140 acre tree farm in the Eastern Townships of Quebec. One day, while in Canadian Tire, I saw a box of clay targets and a hand launcher, and thought of my old shotgun. I spent \$15 on the targets and launcher, got out the old gun, went out to the farm, and tried to break a few targets. One thing followed another and I joined a local shooting club to become an active, if not terribly successful, competitive shotgun and pistol target shooter. Shortly after I received my first pistol permit, Marc Lepine went on his rampage. I have since spent more time in the "gun control debate" than I have shooting.

As a police officer I thought gun control would keep me safe, and I supported anything called gun control. As I researched it over the years I came to realize that it did not work, except in totalitarian societies. As is true of most Canadian gun owners, I support controls which keep guns out of the hands of criminals and those who would misuse them, but I have become increasingly sceptical of the utility of controls on ordinary gun-owners. I personally give the police a list of all my guns, whether required or not, because I want them to have it in case of theft. Just because I do this, personally, does not mean that I think it is a good public policy to have mandatory universal registration.

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