

How do they get their guns?

1. Overview

In Quebec most firearms recovered in crime are not traced so the information available on sources of guns is limited. However, there are data and anecdotal information available from other cities that highlights that across Canada the firearms that are recovered tend to reflect the firearms in circulation.

2. Types of Guns

In gang related activities, handguns and replicas are the weapons of choice but there is also evidence that rifles and shotguns account for a significant portion of firearms recovered in crime.

- Gangs often cannot afford handguns. Therefore, homemade/improvised firearms, fake, drilled-out starter pistols and sawed-off long guns are becoming common. These guns can be used for display and intimidation even if they do not fire.
- Illegal guns are also rented.¹
- The United States is the principal source of illegal guns in Montreal. However, legal guns are also diverted to illegal markets, often through theft.
- Price for illegal handguns on Canada's streets have doubled in the last decade, sometimes as much as 200%- 400% from US over-the-counter prices.²

Firearms Recovered in Crime³

	Rifles and Shotguns		Handguns and Restricted Weapons		Sawed Off and Prohibited		Airguns and Replicas		Other		Total
	number	% of site	number	% of site	number	% of site	number	% of site	number	% of site	
Montreal	75	19%	234	61%	55	14%	8	2%	9	2%	386

3. Sources of Guns

Guns are also used in other forms of violence, including domestic violence, suicides and accidents. There are three major sources of guns which are misused:

- 1. Legal guns misused by their owners** – most often the case with domestic homicide, suicide and accidents
 - The shooter at Dawson College was a legal gun owner and member of a gun club.
 - A young legal handgun owner shot a bystander as he was walking home downtown Toronto in January 2008.
- 2. Legal guns which are diverted to the illegal markets through theft or illegal sale: there is no virtual ban on handguns. There are 500,000 legally owned handguns in Canada.**
 - Legally owned guns are often improperly stored, and stolen or sold illegally.
 - Every year, as many as 3,000 firearms are reported stolen in Canada and in the hands of criminals.
 - Some youth gang members are involved in the theft and re-sale of firearms. *“Find out who’s dad goes out hunting. You find some kid who is not part of the gang who wishes to be part of the gang or looks up to you or you know from class, go to his house, pretend like you are going to do homework for him (then) pocket a gun. Throw a rifle out the back window or*

whatever from the basement. One of your friends will run by and pick it up. You can buy bullets at Canadian Tire, you can buy (them) just about anywhere.” (Bill, 21)⁴

- Toronto Police discovered that it was easy to buy guns over the Internet. The investigation led them to arrest four people who face a total of 276 charges and to seize many firearms⁵.

3. *Smuggled guns originating from the US, typically acquired through theft, straw purchases, or gun shows*

- These guns account for most than 50% of the handguns recovered in crime in large cities.
- In 2004, the Canada Border Services Agency seized 1,099 firearms at the border including 140 non-restricted firearms, 299 restricted firearms and 660 prohibited firearms.⁶ This is the tip of the iceberg.

¹ RCMP. Feature Focus: Youth, Gangs and Guns. 2006.

² Mackenzie Institute Newsletter, “On Street Gangs and Guns”, January 2005.

³ Firearms Smuggling Work Group. Firearms Recovered in Crime – Report. 1995.

⁴ Frederick Matthews, “Youth gangs on youth gangs” Solicitor General Canada, 1993, p. 31.

⁵ Tracy Huffman, “Buying Guns On Internet Too Easy”, Toronto Star, November 10, 2005

⁶ Canada Firearms Center. Commissioner of Firearms 2004 Report. 2005.