

## Four-in-five Canadians support complete ban on civilian possession of assault style weapons

*Fewer, but still two-in-three, also say they support a ban on handguns*

**May 1, 2020** – With the Trudeau government poised to ban some “assault style” weapons, it finds significant support for a change first promised by the Liberals in 2015.

The results of the latest public opinion survey from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute show an overwhelming majority – nearly four-in-five – support a complete prohibition on civilian possession of the types of weapons used in the Montreal Massacre in 1989, and most recently, the rampage of an assault weapon-carrying murderer who killed 22 people in Nova Scotia last month.

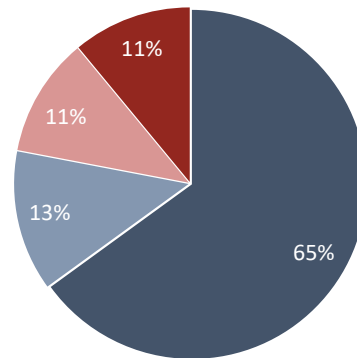
Significantly, two-thirds (65%) *strongly* support such a move, giving federal policy makers a clear mandate to go forward.

Endorsement for the change transcends political and regional divides, although a slight majority of Canada's current gun owners oppose it (55%).

### More Key Findings:

- While Canadians express majority support for banning both assault weapons and handguns, a significant minority – one-in-three – say they oppose a handgun ban (compared to 22 per cent that oppose an assault weapons ban).
- Despite high support for these firearm bans among Canadians; the federal government would still likely face substantial pushback on implementing any new gun control legislation. Nearly half say current gun control laws in Canada are either too strict (13%) or about right (34%).
- 57 per cent of Canadians say they have confidence in the RCMP. This is down slightly from 62 per cent in 2018. Notably, confidence in the RCMP is highest in Nova Scotia at 72 per cent.

**Would you support or oppose Canada having a complete ban on civilian possession of Assault weapons?**



■ Strongly support ■ Support ■ Oppose ■ Strongly oppose

### METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from April 28 – 30, 2020 among a representative randomized sample of 1,581 Canadian adults who are members of [Angus Reid Forum](#). For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of this size would carry a margin of error of +/- 2.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding. The survey was self-commissioned and paid for by ARI. Detailed tables are found at the end of this release.

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## About ARI

The **Angus Reid Institute (ARI)** was founded in October 2014 by pollster and sociologist, Dr. Angus Reid. ARI is a national, not-for-profit, non-partisan public opinion research foundation established to advance education by commissioning, conducting and disseminating to the public accessible and impartial statistical data, research and policy analysis on economics, political science, philanthropy, public administration, domestic and international affairs and other socio-economic issues of importance to Canada and its world.

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### Widespread support for banning assault weapons, handguns

As Nova Scotians and Canadians across the country continue to mourn the loss of 22 people, killed in a mass shooting in April, the Liberal government appears set to move on a long-promised ban on assault weapons in Canada.

Importantly, the classification of an “assault weapon” is not currently a term with legal definition in Canada. In its recent research, however, the federal government [describes this type of weapon as](#) “semi-automatic firearms with a large magazine of ammunition that were designed and configured for rapid fire.” These [include](#) the AR-15 used in a number of recent mass shootings, the Ruger Mini-14, used in the Ecole Polytechnique massacre in Montreal in 1989, and the CSA-VZ-58, which was carried by the gunman in the Quebec Mosque shooting in 2017.

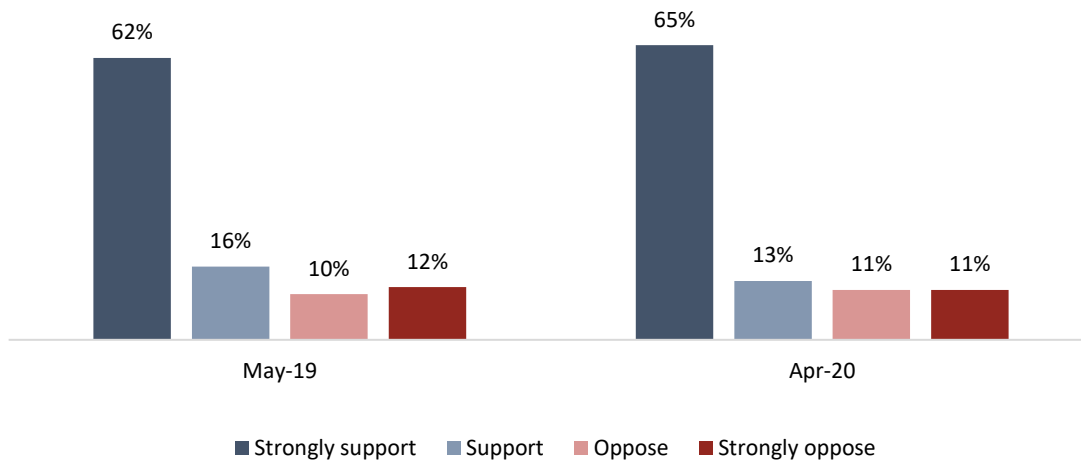
These weapons [and others](#) are expected to be banned by the Liberal government through an order-in-council. The ban is something the vast majority of Canadians have been supportive of in recent years. Nearly four-in-five Canadians canvassed between April 28 – 30 say they support a complete ban on civilian possession of such weapons. While opinions may have hardened slightly after the tragedy in Nova Scotia, it is worth noting that support for such a ban was already at this level last year when the Angus Reid Institute studied the issue:

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## CONTACT:

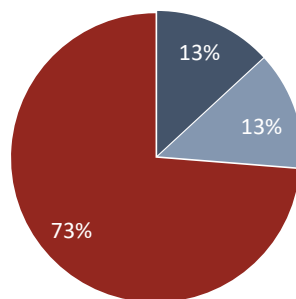
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**Would you support or oppose Canada having a complete ban on civilian possession of Assault weapons?**



A proposed ban, however, generates more pushback among Canadian gun owners. For reference, about 13 per cent of Canadians say that they currently own a gun, while the same number say that they have owned one previously but do not currently:

**Have you ever personally owned a gun?  
(All respondents, n=1,581)**

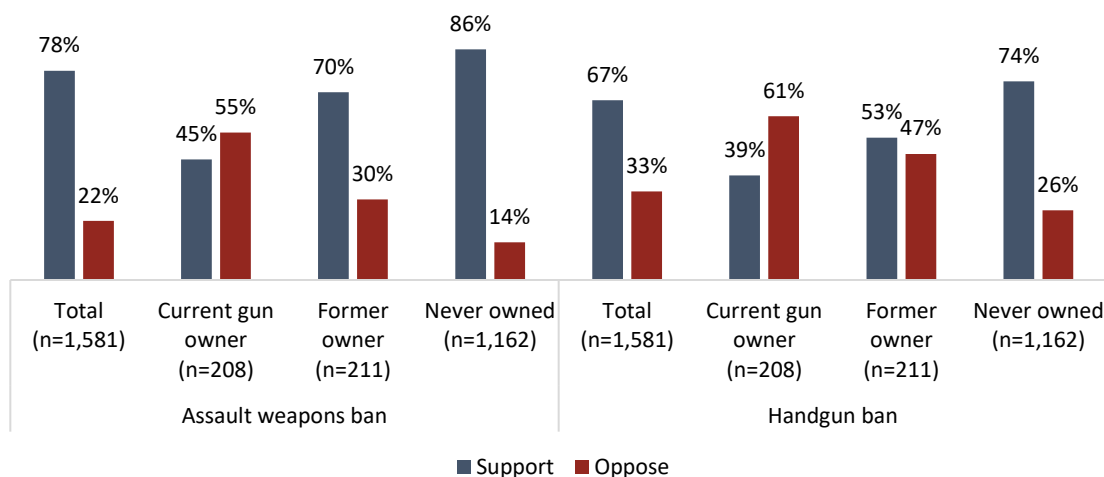


- Yes, currently own a gun(s)
- Have owned a gun(s) in the past but not currently
- No, never owned a gun

These current and previous gun owners feel differently about banning assault weapons – and handguns. Majorities of current gun owners, for instance, are more likely to oppose each ban (although it is a slight

majority when it comes to assault weapons). By contrast, former gun owners are overwhelmingly in favour of banning assault weapons, but very narrowly support the prospect of a handgun ban.

**Support or oppose each ban based on gun ownership  
(All Respondents)**



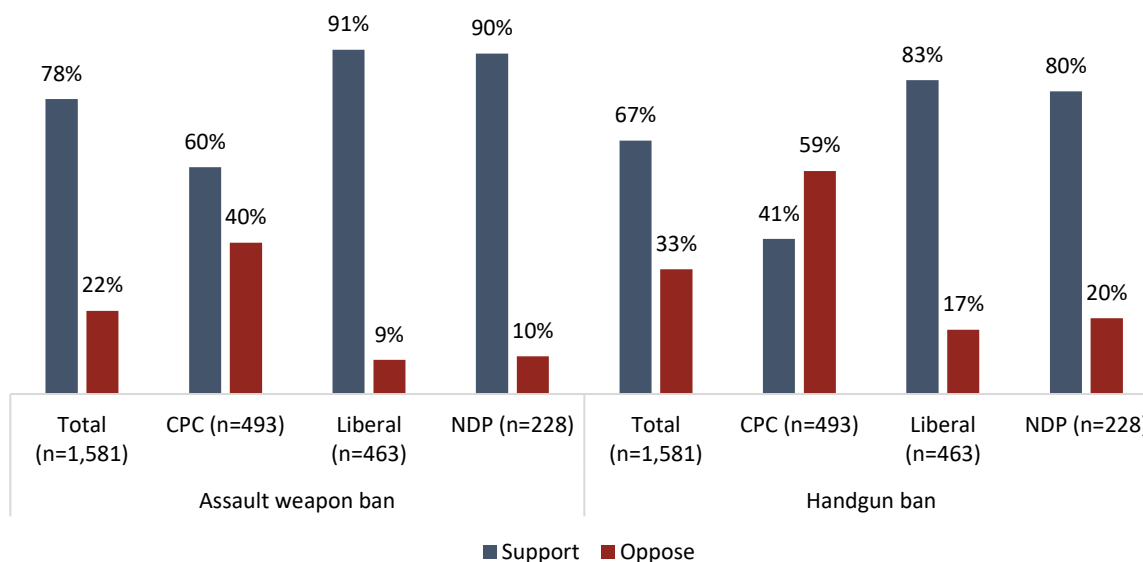
Regionally, people in Quebec and Nova Scotia, places that bear the deep scars of gun violence, are most likely to support banning assault weapons. That said, two-thirds in each part of the country support such a prohibition.

Albertans and Prairie residents are less certain about a ban on handguns than the rest of the country:

<i>Support or oppose each type of ban on civilian ownership</i>									
	Total (n=1,581)	Region							
		BC (n=205)	AB (n=155)	SK (n=128)	MB (n=130)	ON (n=305)	QC (n=253)	NS (n=185)	Rest of ATL (n=220)
<b>Assault weapons ban</b>									
Support	78%	78%	65%	69%	72%	78%	87%	83%	73%
Oppose	22%	22%	35%	31%	28%	22%	13%	17%	27%
<b>Handgun ban</b>									
Support	67%	65%	43%	52%	56%	69%	80%	67%	59%
Oppose	33%	35%	57%	48%	44%	31%	20%	33%	41%

Meanwhile, the Liberal government's support base in the most recent election is among the most supportive of a ban on each type of weapon, along with those who supported the NDP last fall. Most past Conservative voters oppose a ban on handguns but support one on assault weapons.

### Support or oppose each ban based on political affiliation



### Half say gun laws need to be stricter

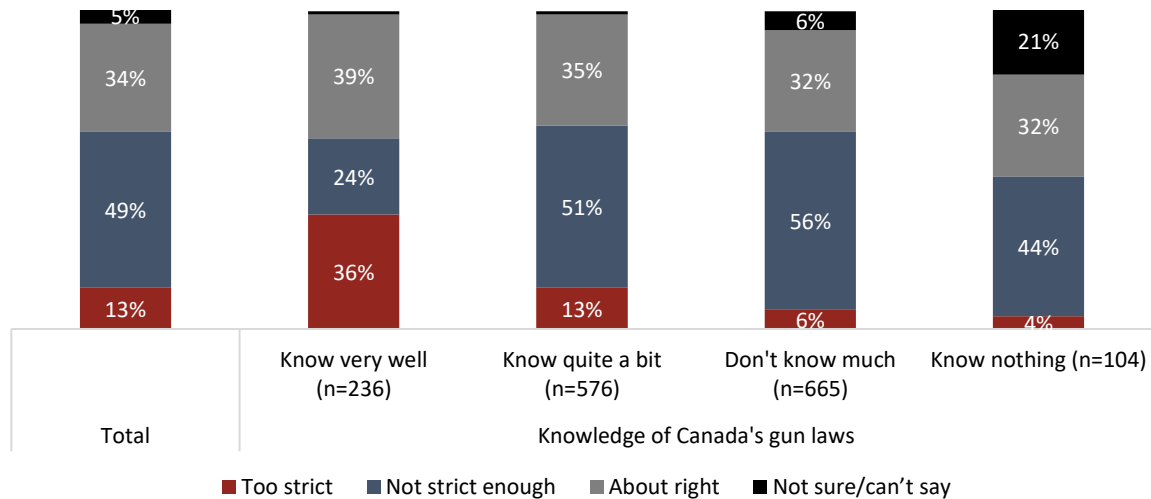
Looking more broadly at the question of Canada's gun laws, half of Canadians (49%) are of the opinion that these regulations need to be stricter. One-third of Canadians (34%) feel that the gun laws in place are striking a good balance, while 13 per cent feel they are too strict. Interestingly, those who identify as knowing the ins and outs of the laws are divided between whether the laws are about right (39%), too strict (36%) or not strict enough (24%).

**[Related: In depth discussion of process to possess restricted, non-restricted gun in Canada](#)**

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Based on whatever you know and on your own impressions, would you say, the current gun laws in Canada are too strict, not strict enough, or about right?  
(All Respondents, n=1,581)



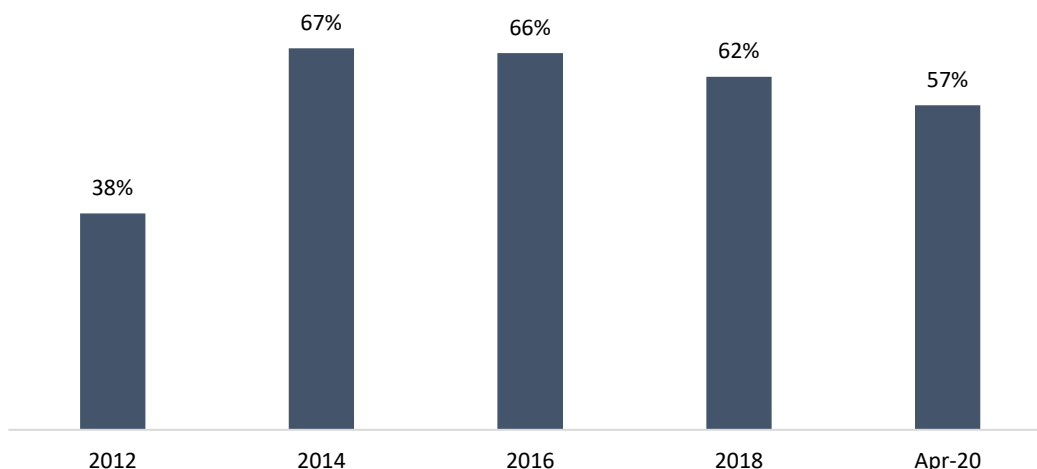
**Confidence in RCMP largely unchanged**

During and after the mass shooting in Nova Scotia, serious questions were raised over the RCMP's reaction to the incident. For example, why did the force use social media rather than the province's central alert system to update residents about the ongoing incident?

This, and broader concerns have been noted by the Canadian Association of Journalists that the RCMP in Canada have been "very inconsistent" in their dealings with media and their transparency.

Despite these issues (which will linger as the RCMP reviews the incident) public confidence in the institution does not appear to have deteriorated significantly. Overall, 57 per cent of Canadians say that they have confidence in the policing body, consistent with polling done over the past three years.

**Percentage of Canadians who say they have confidence in the RCMP**



Of note: Nova Scotians do not lack confidence in the RCMP working within their province. Confidence, in fact, is higher in Nova Scotia than any other region of the country.

<b>Percentage of Canadians who say are confident or not confident in the RCMP</b>									
	Total (n=1,581)	Region							
		BC (n=205)	AB (n=155)	SK (n=128)	MB (n=130)	ON (n=305)	QC (n=253)	NS (n=185)	Rest of ATL (n=220)
<b>Confident</b>	57%	57%	48%	66%	61%	54%	63%	72%	60%
<b>Not confident</b>	35%	40%	50%	32%	36%	35%	27%	26%	37%

*For detailed results by age, gender, region, education, and other demographics, [click here](#).*

*For detailed results by knowledge of gun control laws and gun ownership, [click here](#).*

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