

## Canadians say gun violence rising; prefer national policy over provincial regulations

*Two-in-five (43%) say gun violence increasing where they live, including majorities in Montreal & Toronto*

**May 16, 2022** – People in Canada, the United States and around the world were reminded once again of the horrific and angering human toll of gun violence over the weekend as a mass shooter murdered 10 people at a Buffalo, New York, grocery store - just blocks from the Canada-U.S. border.

Just last week, the Liberal government made its latest gun policy announcement last week, creating “[more stringent rules](#)” to track the sale or transfer of non-restricted guns, a move that comes as Canadians on this side of the border express concerns that gun violence has been increasing domestically.

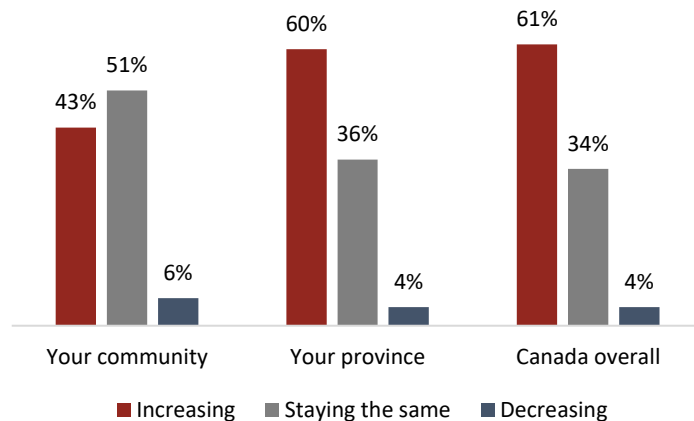
New data from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute canvassing the views of 5,000 Canadians, including large samples in urban centres, reflect these perceptions.

Overall, three-in-five (60%) say gun violence is rising in their province, with Quebecers (75%) and Ontarians (66%) most likely to perceive this to be the case.

Further, two-in-five (43%) say gun violence is increasing in their own community. Those in urban areas are considerably more likely to say this (46%) when compared with Canadians living in rural parts of the country (29%) and residents in Montreal (65%), Halifax (56%), and Toronto (54% in 416 area code, 57% in 905 area code) are most likely to note that their communities have become more violent. Official data from Statistics Canada confirms that firearm offences have, indeed, become [more common over the past decade](#).

Gun control advocates recently sent a letter to Minister of Public Safety Marco Mendicino asking him and the federal government to ban handguns with consistent national policy and avoid creating a “[disastrous patchwork](#)” by offloading this decision to the provinces, as has been done thus far. Asked for their own views on this, Canadians lean heavily toward federal regulation rather than leaving it up to provinces to decide (66% do).

**Would you say that gun violence has been increasing, decreasing, or staying the same in:**  
(All respondents, n=5,002)



### **METHODOLOGY:**

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from Jan. 7-12, 2022 among a representative randomized sample of 5,002 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 +/- 2.0 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.

### **CONTACT:**

**Shachi Kurl, President:** 604.908.1693 [shachi.kurl@angusreid.org](mailto:shachi.kurl@angusreid.org) @shachikurl  
**Dave Korzinski, Research Director:** 250.899.0821 [dave.korzinski@angusreid.org](mailto:dave.korzinski@angusreid.org)

Saskatchewan (41%) and Alberta (34%) residents are most likely to support provincial rights on this issue, but in each case more respondents still say national policy would be best.

### More Key Findings:

- Asked to gauge Canada's gun laws, 17 per cent of respondents say these laws are too strict, while nearly three-times as many say they are not strict enough (44%). A slightly smaller group of 30 per cent say current laws are about right in their view.
- Gun owners are the only group within which a majority (56%) say gun laws are too strict. Among those who used to own a firearm, have one in the household that is not their own, or do not own any, sentiment is that laws are either about right or need to be tightened.
- Nearly three-in-five (57%) current gun owners say federal laws on handgun ownership are the better policy choice, rather than leaving this decision to the provinces. Among those who neither own a gun or know someone that owns one, seven-in-ten (71%) agree.
- Canadians are divided about a federal buyback program for banned firearms. Two-in-five support it – rising to 50 per cent in Metro Vancouver and 54 per cent in the Toronto core (area code 416). Overall, 47 per cent oppose the idea, including three-quarters (74%) of current gun owners.

### 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.*

***Because its small population precludes drawing discrete samples over multiple waves, data on Prince Edward Island is not released.***

### INDEX

#### Part One: Gun violence seen to be rising in many urban centres and overall in Canada

#### Part Two: Gun policy

- **Do laws need tightening? Owners and non-owners disagree**
- **Handgun ban – federal policy preferred to provincial**
- **Buyback program divides Canadians**

#### Part One: Gun violence seen to be rising in many urban centres and overall in Canada

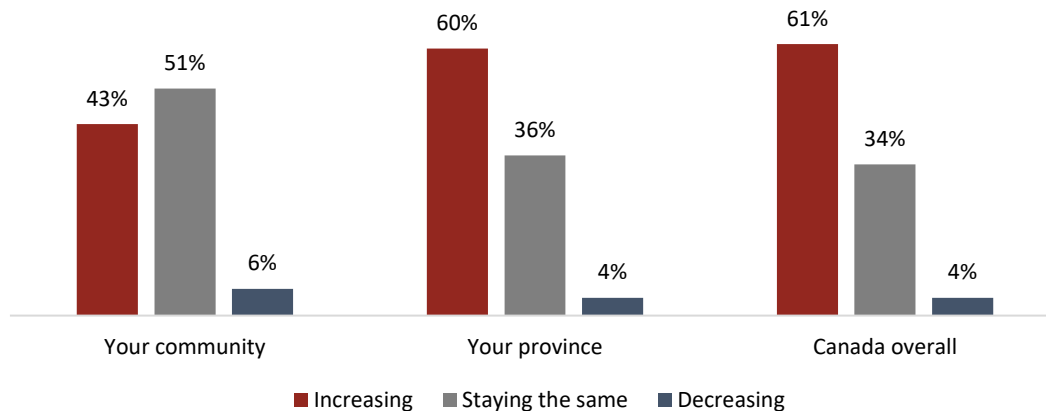
Canadians worry about increasing gun violence around them. Three-in-five believe it's increasing in their province and in Canada, while fewer, but still two-in-five, believe it's increasing in the community where they live. Few Canadians believe there are fewer shootings happening in the country, in their province, or in their community:

---

### CONTACT:

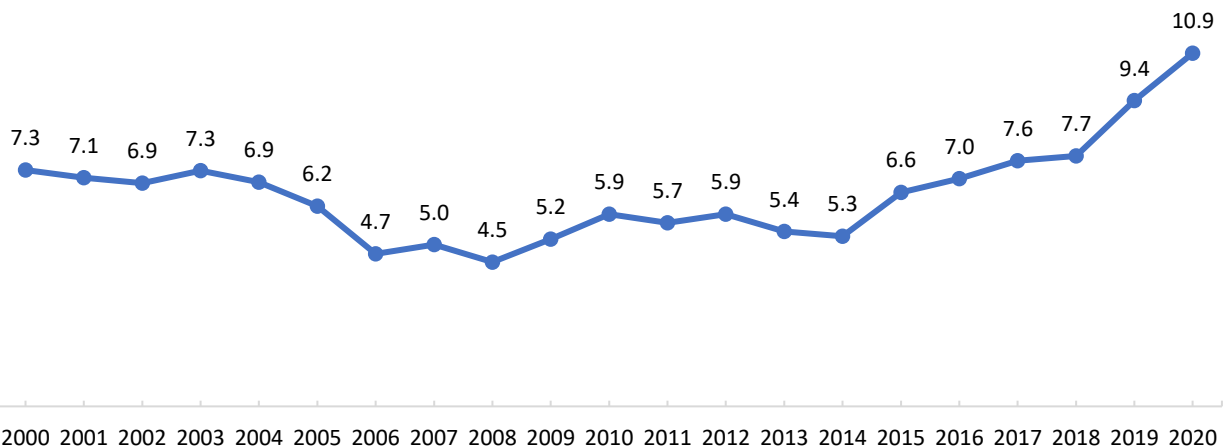
Shachi Kurl, President: 604.908.1693 [shachi.kurl@angusreid.org](mailto:shachi.kurl@angusreid.org) @shachikurl  
Dave Korzinski, Research Director: 250.899.0821 [dave.korzinski@angusreid.org](mailto:dave.korzinski@angusreid.org)

**Would you say that gun violence has been increasing, decreasing, or staying the same in each:  
(All respondents, n=5,002)**



This perception lines up with official data from the country’s police departments. Firearms violations have increased by 50 per cent since the turn of the century, [according to Statistics Canada](#), and nearly doubled from a lull of such incidents a decade ago. However, Statistics Canada data also shows the number of homicides with firearms holding [steady in recent years](#).

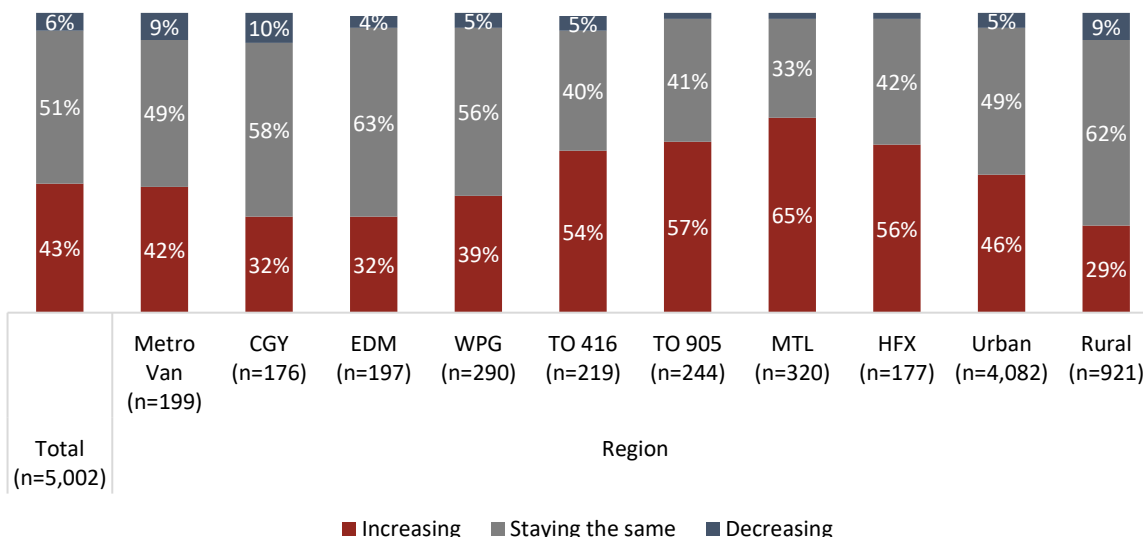
**Firearms violations per 100,000 people in Canada over time  
(Source: Statistics Canada)**



The perception of increased gun violence is higher in some of the country’s cities than others. Two-thirds of Montrealers believe shootings are increasing in that city – [a spike reflected in official statistics](#). More than half living in both the downtown core and suburbs of Toronto believe there has been more gun violence in that city, too, where [a number of shootings have taken place in recent months](#). In Halifax, a majority say gun crime has gotten worse, as police [responded to 62 shootings](#) in 2021, double the number of any year since 2015.

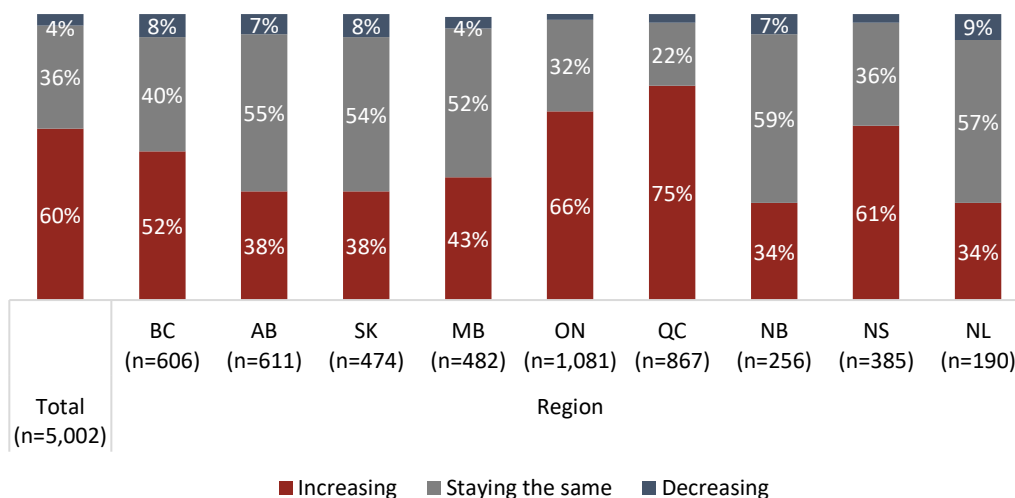
While the belief in the increased volume of shootings isn't as strong in other urban areas in the country, the proportion of respondents who believe gun violence is becoming less frequent tops out at one-in-ten:

**Would you say that gun violence has been increasing, decreasing, or staying the same in your community?**



Driven by their dense urban centres, Ontarians, Quebecers, and Nova Scotians are the most likely to say gun violence is increasing in their province. For those living in B.C., the provincewide opinion of a worsening firearms situation is stronger than in metro Vancouver itself. Elsewhere, the majority opinion is that shootings have remained at a consistent level:

**Would you say that gun violence has been increasing, decreasing, or staying the same in your province?**



## Part Two: Guns and policy

### Do laws need tightening? Owners and non-owners disagree

In the wake of [the Nova Scotia shooting](#) which left 22 people dead in 2020, the federal Liberal government made good on a promise dating back the 2015 election [to ban “assault-style” weapons](#). The measure was supported by four-in-five Canadians at the time, while two-thirds supported an additional ban on handguns, notably [the most common firearm used in gun-related homicides](#).

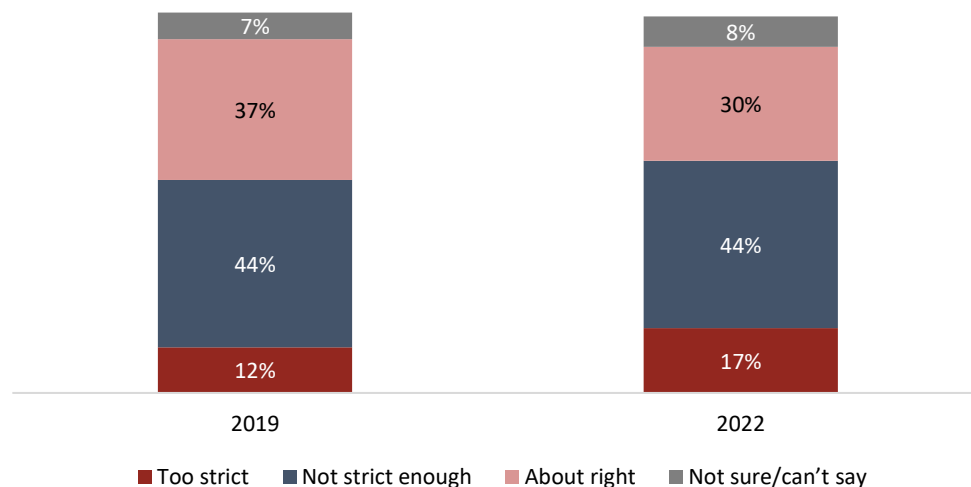
Prior to the assault weapon ban, a plurality of Canadians (44%) believed current gun laws were not strict enough. However, half (48%) of Canadians said their knowledge of the current laws was poor.

#### Related:

- [Four-in-five Canadians support complete ban on civilian possession of assault style weapons](#)
- [Amid concern over spread of gun violence, majorities support ban on handguns, assault weapons](#)

With the new rules in place, Canadians are slightly more likely to believe the current laws are too strict when compared to data taken in 2019. However, the largest group, and a similar proportion to 2019, believe there is more to be done:

**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?**

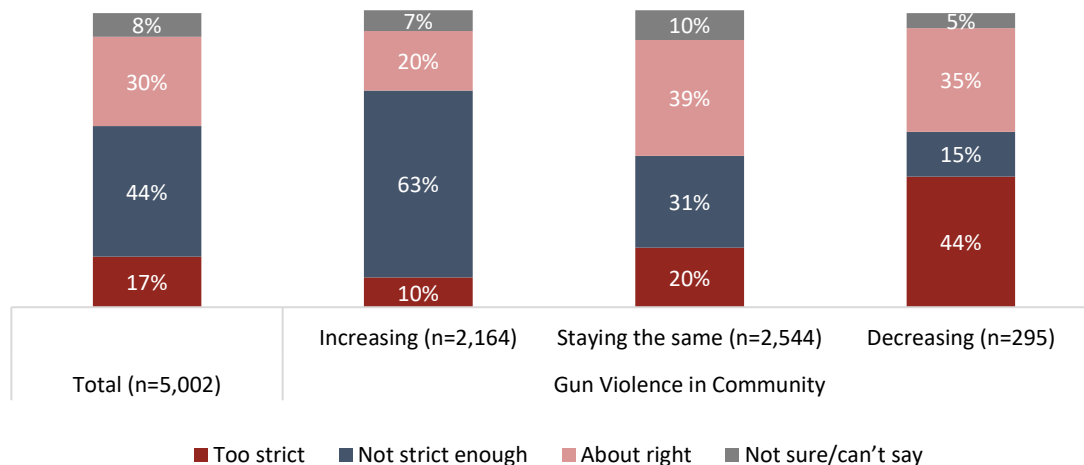


Canadians who believe gun violence is increasing around them are more likely to say the laws need tightening. For the minority who believe the opposite, instead two-in-five (44%) believe the rules are too strict as it is. Still, 15 per cent of the group who believe gun violence is decreasing want stricter laws:

#### CONTACT:

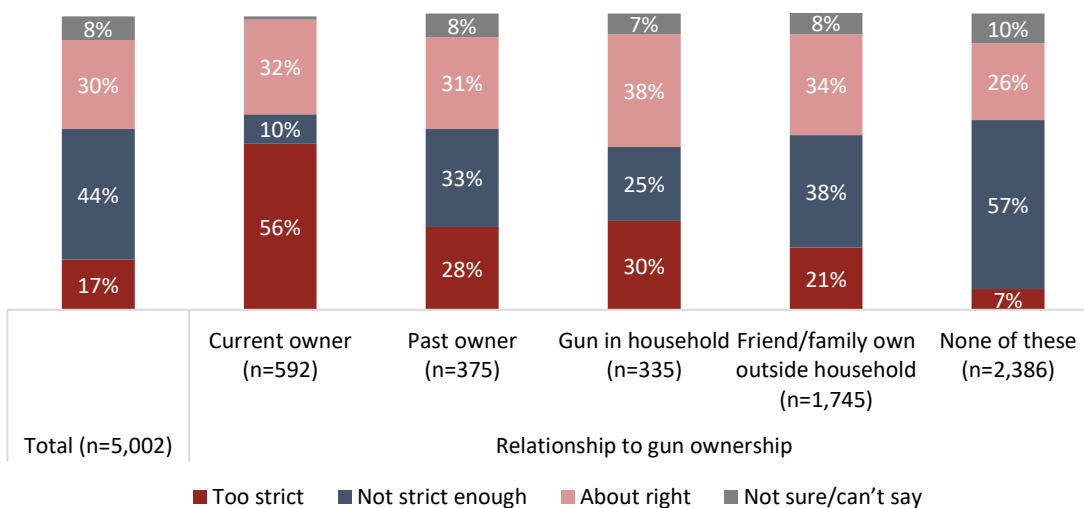
Shachi Kurl, President: 604.908.1693 [shachi.kurl@angusreid.org](mailto:shachi.kurl@angusreid.org) @shachikurl  
 Dave Korzinski, Research Director: 250.899.0821 [dave.korzinski@angusreid.org](mailto:dave.korzinski@angusreid.org)

**Would you say, the current gun laws in Canada are too strict, not strict enough, or about right?**



The perception of how strict or loose the rules are on guns vary by whether or not the respondent owns, or previously owned, a gun. Nearly all (88%) of current owners believe rules are fine as they are or are too strict. That also goes for majorities of past owners, those living with a gun in their household, and those who know a friend or family member who owns a gun. For the nearly half of the country with no proximity to a firearm owner, a majority (57%) instead want stricter rules:

**Would you say, the current gun laws in Canada are too strict, not strict enough, or about right?**



**Handgun ban – federal policy preferred to provincial**

While the Liberal government has mandated the assault weapon ban nationwide, it has taken a different approach to handguns. In December, the federal government announced [a \\$1-billion fund](#) to assist

**CONTACT:**

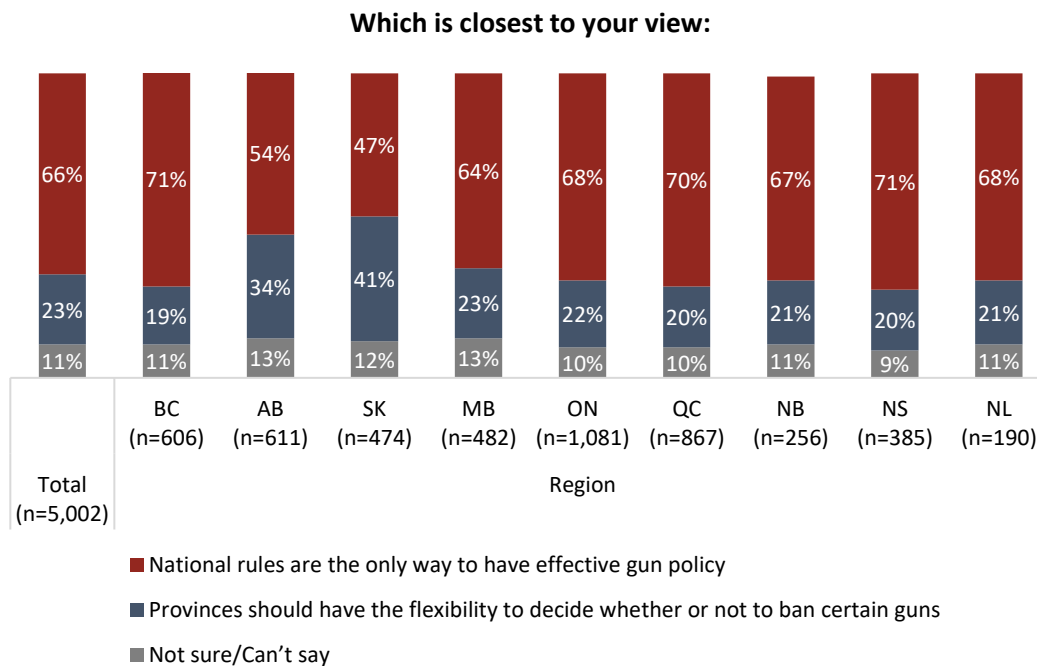
Shachi Kurl, President: 604.908.1693 [shachi.kurl@angusreid.org](mailto:shachi.kurl@angusreid.org) @shachikurl  
 Dave Korzinski, Research Director: 250.899.0821 [dave.korzinski@angusreid.org](mailto:dave.korzinski@angusreid.org)

provinces if those jurisdictions wanted to ban handguns. The fund [may also be accessible to municipalities](#), though a final decision on that has yet to be made.

Recently, Ontario Liberal leader Steven Del Duca announced he would create a provincewide ban on handguns if elected. This, [as a group of gun control advocates](#) including the Coalition for Gun Control, PolySeSouvient, the National Association of Women and the Law, Danforth Families for Safe Communities, the Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians, and the Islamic Cultural Centre of Quebec City, where six people were killed in 2017, have pushed the federal government to create a national policy banning these weapons.

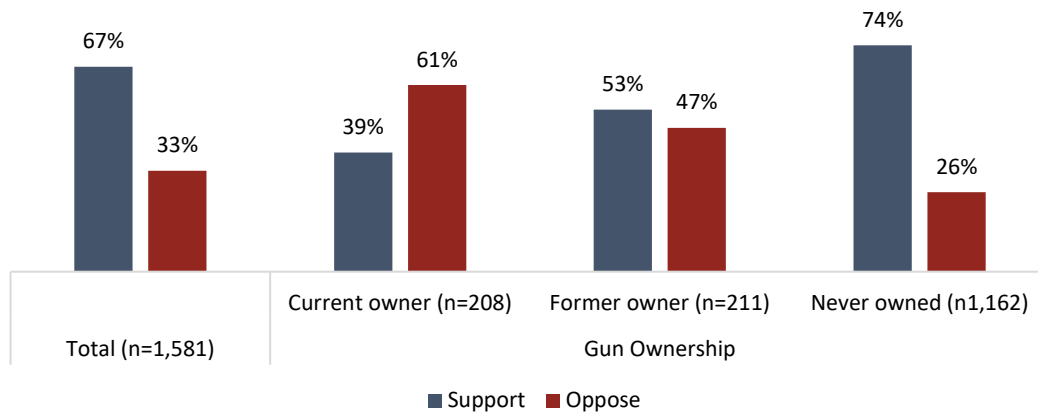
Two-thirds of Canadians are opposed to the federal government’s current position of leaving it to the provinces – which some have criticized because they believe it will result in [an ineffective “patchwork” of rules and regulations](#). One-quarter (23%) disagree and believe provinces should have the flexibility to decide their own laws.

The latter group is larger in Alberta (34%) and Saskatchewan (41%), the only province where support of national rules falls below half. Elsewhere in the country, at least two-thirds believe federal rules are preferable to provincial ones:



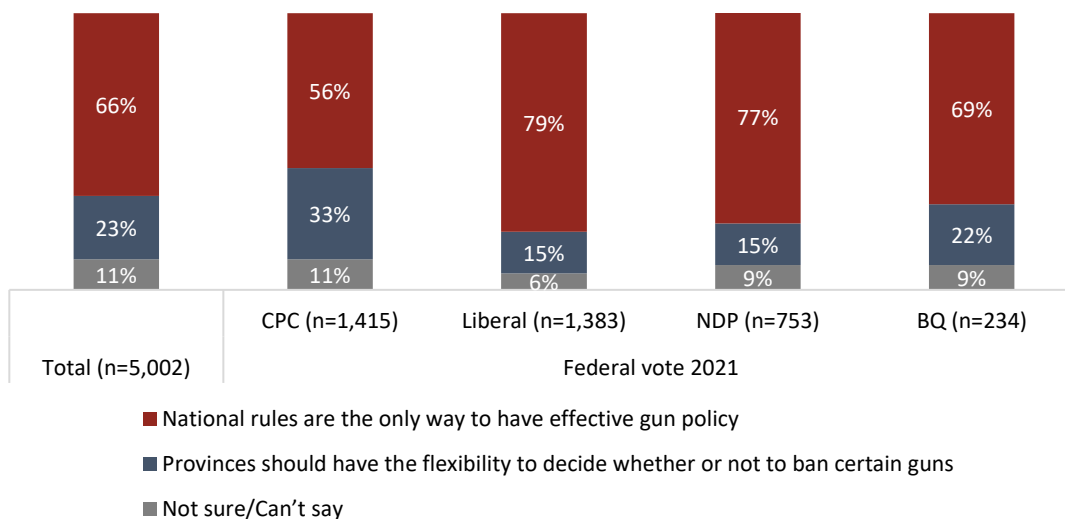
As for the question of banning handguns completely in Canada, the Angus Reid Institute found significant support for a ban in both [2019](#) and [2020](#):

**Would you support or oppose Canada having a complete ban on civilian possession of hand guns? (April 2020)**



While a majority of past voters of all the major political parties believe national rules are the only way to effectively enforce gun control, those who voted Conservative in the 2021 federal election are twice as likely as past NDP and Liberal voters to support provinces having the flexibility to decide their own gun policies:

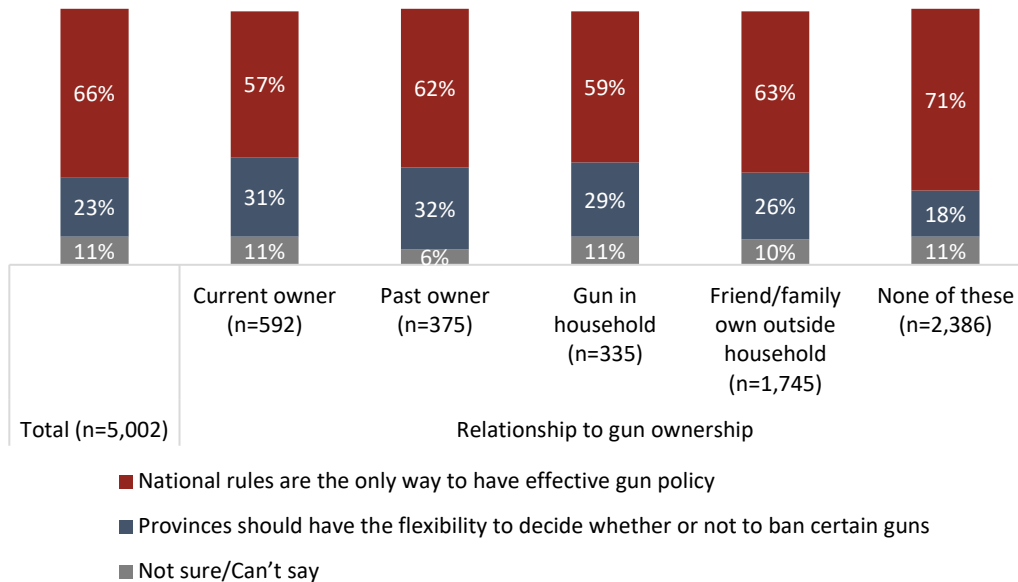
**Which is closest to your view:**



For those who have never owned a gun, and do not have any gun owners among their friends and family, seven-in-ten (71%) believe national gun policies are the only way to go. Support is lower among those who have owned a gun at one point in their lives, but still majorities believe the rules should be set nationally and not provincially:



Which is closest to your view:

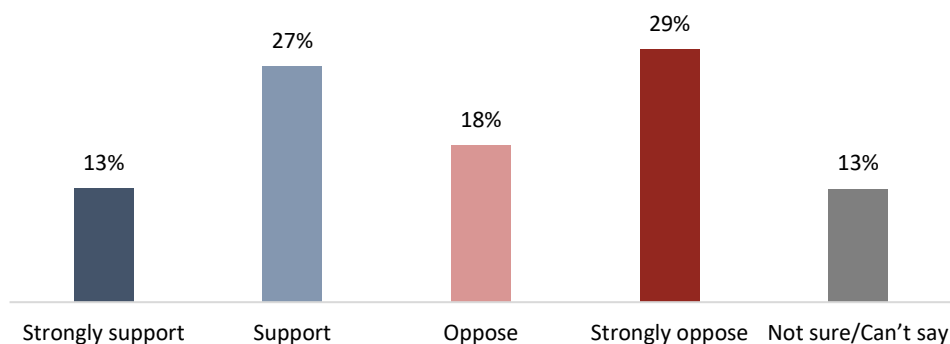


**Buyback program divides Canadians**

The federal government believes it will cost around \$225 million for their mandatory buyback program for the assault-style firearms banned in May 2020. The office of the parliamentary budget officer estimated in 2021 it could cost three times that much.

With the potential costs presented to them, Canadians are slightly more likely to oppose a mandatory buyback program than support it. And for those that oppose a taxpayer-funded gun buyback, three-in-ten (29%) strongly oppose it, more than twice as many who instead strongly support (13%) such a program:

Would you support or oppose this type of (gun buyback) program, knowing it would be funded by taxpayers?  
(All respondents, n=5,002)

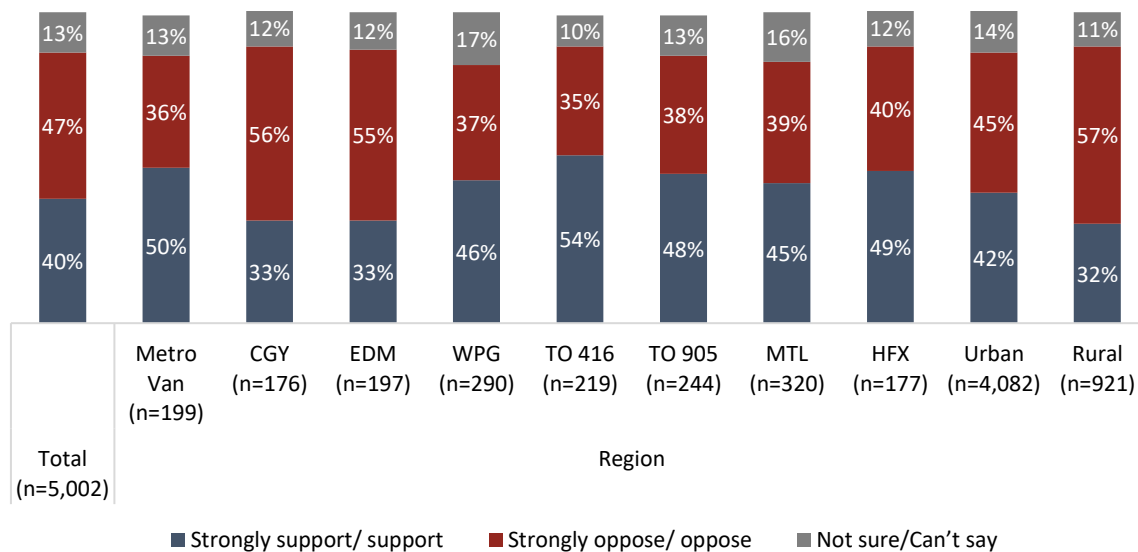


**CONTACT:**

Shachi Kurl, President: 604.908.1693 [shachi.kurl@angusreid.org](mailto:shachi.kurl@angusreid.org) @shachikurl  
 Dave Korzinski, Research Director: 250.899.0821 [dave.korzinski@angusreid.org](mailto:dave.korzinski@angusreid.org)

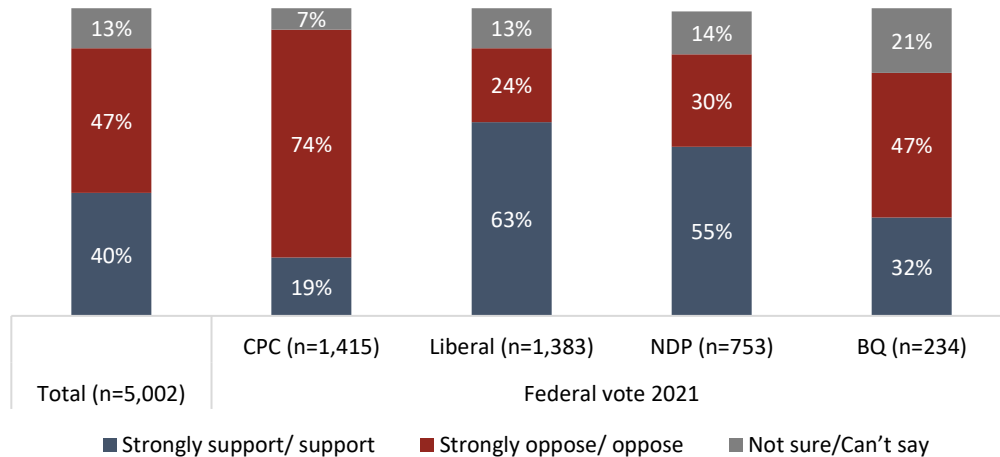
Among the country's major municipalities, support is strongest for a mandatory gun buyback program among those who live in downtown Toronto and metro Vancouver. There, at least half of respondents support such a policy. Support outweighs opposition, too, in Montreal, Winnipeg, and Halifax. Overall, however, urban Canadians are split between support and disapproval for a gun buyback. For rural Canadians, opposition (57%) nearly doubles support (32%):

**Would you support or oppose this type of (gun buyback) program, knowing it would be funded by taxpayers?**



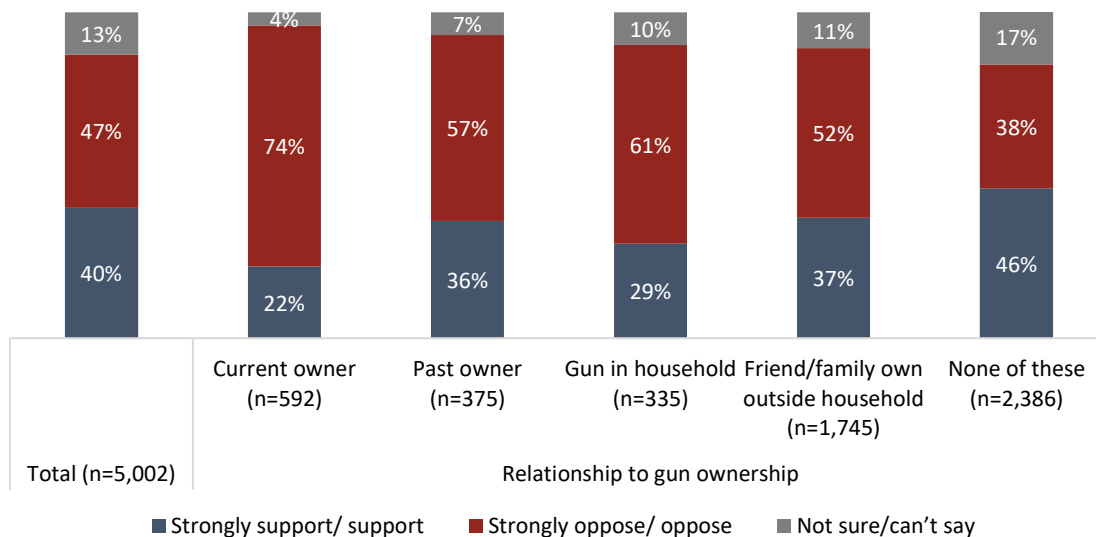
Those who voted for the current government are most likely among partisans to support a gun buyback. More than half (55%) of those who voted for the NDP – which entered into a confidence-and-supply agreement to keep the minority Liberal government in power – also support such a program. Meanwhile, approaching half (47%) of past voters for the Bloc Quebecois and three-quarters (74%) of those who voted Conservative in September oppose offering taxpayers' cash for guns:

**Would you support or oppose this type of (gun buyback) program, knowing it would be funded by taxpayers?**



Opposition is also high among those who currently or previously own a gun. Three-in-five (61%) of those who live with a gun in their household and half (52%) of those who have a friend or family member that owns a gun also oppose a taxpayer-funded gun buyback program. Only for those who fall into none of those groups does support outweigh opposition:

**Would you support or oppose this type of (gun buyback) program, knowing it would be funded by taxpayers?**



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

**For detailed results by respondents' perceptions of gun violence in their community and proximity to gun ownership, [click here](#).**

**CONTACT:**

Shachi Kurl, President: 604.908.1693 [shachi.kurl@angusreid.org](mailto:shachi.kurl@angusreid.org) @shachikurl  
 Dave Korzinski, Research Director: 250.899.0821 [dave.korzinski@angusreid.org](mailto:dave.korzinski@angusreid.org)