

Commissioner of Firearms

2023 Report

The RCMP Canadian
Firearms Program

Canada's Authority
on Firearms



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Catalogue No: PS96E-PDF
ISSN: 1927-6923

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Message from the Commissioner



I am pleased to present the Commissioner of Firearms Report highlighting the results of the Canadian Firearms Program in 2023.

The RCMP Canadian Firearms Program plays a critical role in firearms control. The program's mission is to enhance public safety by providing expert advice and promoting compliance with the firearms regulatory regime, and providing support to law enforcement agencies. It administers the *Firearms Act* and regulations, delivers specialized support services to partners, and promotes firearms safety.

On March 30, 2023, the Mass Casualty Commission released its final report, "Turning the Tide Together", into the mass casualty that occurred in Nova Scotia in April 2020. The final report provided findings to help make communities safer in the future, including recommendations regarding access to firearms. The RCMP is addressing the recommendations. For example, the Canadian Firearms Program is supporting and strengthening efforts to combat the smuggling, trafficking and misuse of firearms. The program is focusing on: improving law enforcement partner knowledge of firearms investigative procedures; enhancing law enforcement partner access to investigative supports; integrating data and intelligence in operations; and raising awareness on the value of firearms tracing.

The RCMP is also working closely with the Canada Border Services Agency and U.S. law enforcement agencies, including through the Cross-Border Firearms Task Force, to: share intelligence, coordinate joint investigations and leverage new technologies to disrupt smuggling networks and prevent illegal firearms from crossing the border.

Bill C-21 received Royal Assent on December 15, 2023. It introduced into law the national freeze on the transfer of handguns that took effect via regulations in October 2022. Bill C-21 also provides tools to advance firearms investigations through information sharing and to help address firearms use in gender-based and intimate partner violence. The new law also established tougher penalties to combat firearms crime, including trafficking and smuggling.

The RCMP and the Canadian Firearms Program will continue to work with provincial, territorial and federal partners on additional opportunities to reduce access to illegal firearms. We are also committed to enhancing the administration of the firearms regulatory regime in support of public safety and the lawful ownership and use of firearms in Canada.

Mike Duheme
Commissioner of the RCMP

Message from the Director General of the Canadian Firearms Program



This report details the outstanding work accomplished by the Canadian Firearms Program and its provincial, territorial and international partners in 2023.

Consistent with our mission, the Canadian Firearms Program continued to advance its modernization efforts to enhance services to our clients and partners, and continued to support the implementation of government initiatives such as the provisions of Bill C-21 that came into force on Royal Assent in 2023.

In May 2023, the Canadian Firearms Program initiated a Northern Services Review to assess the delivery of regulatory services in the North. The review involves significant in-person consultations and will be completed in early 2024. The results will inform the ongoing development of strategies to promote firearms safety and improve program services and communications in the three territories.

Canadian Firearms Program modernization efforts and the Canadian Firearms Digital Services Solution project continue to benefit clients. The online portal for new Possession and Acquisition Licences (MyCFP account) reduces processing times and provides individuals with information about their application in the initial stages of processing. In 2023, the program added online applications for a Minor's Licence, a photo exemption, a fee waiver, and for the *Aboriginal Peoples of Canada Adaptations Regulations (Firearms)*. More services will move online in 2024.

December 1, 2023, marked the 25th anniversary of the Canadian Firearms Program and the coming into force of the *Firearms Act*.

I continue to be proud of the work of the Canadian Firearms Program and the dedication and professionalism of its staff in advancing modern approaches to better serve our clients and make enhancements in public safety.

Kellie Paquette

Director General, Canadian Firearms Program

<https://www.rcmp.ca/en/firearms>

Stats that apply for the entire year

Licensing

③ **2,364,726**
firearms licence holders, which includes

> **1,560,304**
non-restricted licence holders

> **12,222**
Minor's Licence holders

> **752,002**
restricted licence holders

> **40,188**
prohibited licence holders

③ **1,296,221**
registered firearms – only restricted and prohibited firearms need to be registered

③ **4,036**
licensed firearms businesses, not including museums and carriers

Tracing

③ **6,337**
firearms traced

③ **3,866**
crime guns identified

Firearms Reference Table

③ **3,527**
new records added

③ **522**
records updated

Public information support

③ **38,402**
email inquiries received

③ **24,015**
Canadian Firearms Registry Online queries per day

③ **388,601**
pieces of incoming mail, including inquiries and mail-in applications

③ **1,250,108**
phone calls received, including the Firearms Service Delivery Directorate, the Canadian Firearms Registry, and Chief Firearms Offices across Canada

The Canadian Firearms Program

The Canadian Firearms Program's mission is to enhance public safety by providing expert technical advice on the regulatory framework, ensure compliance of the firearms regulatory regime and to support law enforcement in the prevention and investigation of firearms crime and misuse.

In pursuit of its mission, the Canadian Firearms Program:

- /// supports the lawful ownership and use of firearms in Canada by regulating firearms licensing and registration, and provides firearms owners with quality service, fair treatment, and protection of confidential information;
- /// recognizes that the involvement of firearms owners and users, firearms businesses, law enforcement agencies, the provinces, the territories, federal agencies, Indigenous communities, safety instructors, and firearms verifiers is essential for effective program and service delivery;
- /// commits to ongoing improvement and innovation to achieve the highest levels of service and user experience;
- /// engages its clients and stakeholders to review and develop policies, and to communicate critical information on program requirements and results;
- /// manages its resources efficiently to provide good value for money; and
- /// provides clear and accurate reporting of program performance and resource management.

Partners

The program works with various domestic and international partners, by:

- // providing firearms-related policy support and technical information to **Public Safety Canada**;
- // providing technical guidance on firearms-related questions for international, cross-border issues to the **Canada Border Services Agency** and **Global Affairs Canada**;
- // supporting the **Department of Justice** and Public Safety Canada on legal policy development in firearms-related criminal law;
- // supporting **Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada** and **Indigenous Services Canada** on firearms legislation and related issues that are of particular interest to Indigenous Peoples;
- // collaborating with **municipal, provincial and territorial law enforcement agencies** on investigations leading to prosecution of individuals involved in the smuggling, trafficking and criminal use of firearms; and
- // working with **international partners**, including law enforcement agencies from the United States and INTERPOL, to help reduce the illegal movement of firearms across borders and sharing of the Firearms Reference Table with 196 countries.

Noteworthy in 2023

New and improved firearms licence cards

Starting in January 2023, firearms Possession and Acquisition Licence cards were given a different look and contain enhanced security features.



The Canadian Firearms Program was honoured to receive, with the Canadian Bank Note Company, a **2023 Élan Award for manufacturing excellence** from the International Card Manufacturers Association for the new Possession and Acquisition Licence card. Élan Awards recognize best card design and technological innovation internationally.

Update of the Range Design and Construction Guidelines

In July 2023, the program published updated Range Design and Construction Guidelines. The guidelines explain the minimal acceptable levels of design and construction standards for handgun, shotgun and rifle ranges that a Chief Firearms Officer uses in their assessment to issue a range approval. Any person who wishes to operate a shooting range must receive approval under section 29(1) of the *Firearms Act*.

The guidelines are based on historical evidence, scientific data generated from trials and considered opinion. They provide appropriate ballistic and statistical calculations for the purpose of providing reasonable and acceptable levels of range safety. Range safety requirements are developed to mitigate risk by identifying and assessing hazards associated with target shooting, and developing and implementing controls to reduce or eliminate those hazards.

To obtain a copy of the guidelines, clients can email: shootingrange-champsdetir@rcmp-grc.gc.ca.

The public may obtain more information about shooting clubs and ranges at: <https://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/en/firearms/shooting-clubs-and-ranges>.

The program continues to modernize its services

The Canadian Firearms Digital Services Solution Project team was honored with the **Excellence in Building Services for the Users Award** at the Digital Government Community Awards 2023 for its outstanding work in improving online services for Canadian Firearms Program clients.

In addition to the online services made available in 2022 that allow Canadians to apply online for an [Authorization to Transport](#) and a [Possession and Acquisition Licence](#), in December 2023, the Canadian Firearms Program introduced new services to its user-friendly online portal and case management system.

Through [MyCFP Portal](#), individuals can now also:

- // apply for a Minor's Licence;
- // seek a Photo Waiver or Fee Waiver, if applicable;
- // apply for a firearms licence even if they are not residents of Canada, or require a letter of good conduct; and
- // seek a licence under the *Aboriginal Peoples of Canada Adaptations Regulations (Firearms)*.

The “MyCFP Inbox” feature was also introduced in 2023, for individuals who have submitted a firearms licence application online. This system allows new online applicants to send messages to the Canadian Firearms Program or receive and reply to “CFP correspondence”, like requests for additional information, by connecting to their MyCFP account.

In October 2023, a digital tool was made available to select Firearms Safety Instructors allowing them to report Safety Course Report results online. The Canadian Firearms Program will expand this service to more instructors and jurisdictions in 2024.

These new features support the Canadian Firearms Program's commitment to improving our clients' experience by providing services that are simple, modern and efficient, and strengthen public safety.

It takes less time to process first-time client applications for a firearms licence submitted online using the MyCFP portal than applications submitted by mail. Online applications require fewer follow-ups — less than 10% of online applications are incomplete and more than 25% of paper applications require the program to request missing information from a client.

In 2023, a new multi-factor authentication feature was also enabled for clients using GCKey to access the Canadian Firearms Program's online services. This includes the MyCFP Portal, Individual Web Services, Business Web Services and Police/Public Agency Web Services. This feature elevates the protection of personal information, provides an extra layer of security from cyberattacks and will help prevent unauthorized access to the GCKey-enabled services.

Bill C-21 receives Royal Assent

On December 15, 2023, [Bill C-21 received Royal Assent](#).

Several measures immediately came into force, including:

- ▮ changes to the *Firearms Act* regarding restrictions on handgun transfers that were first implemented by regulations in 2022;
- ▮ changes to the definition of a prohibited firearm;
- ▮ a requirement for an individual to have a valid Possession and Acquisition Licence to purchase a cartridge magazine domestically;
- ▮ a new “red flag” law, allowing anyone to make an application to a court for an emergency weapons prohibition order to immediately remove firearms, for up to 30 days, from an individual who may pose a danger to themselves or others; and
- ▮ an increase in the maximum penalty of imprisonment for firearms smuggling and trafficking.

Additional information about [Bill C-21](#) can be found at: <https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/cntrng-crm/frms/c21-en.aspx>.

The Canadian Firearms Program will continue to support and provide information to firearms owners, businesses, Chief Firearms Officers, and police services about the legislative changes and what they mean for each of these groups.

Disclosure of information

Bill C-21 amended section 88.1 of the *Firearms Act* to create a mechanism for the disclosure of specific licensing and registration information to law enforcement in specific cases. If the Commissioner of Firearms, the Registrar of Firearms, or a Chief Firearms Officer has reasonable grounds to suspect that an individual is using or has used a licence to transfer, or offer to transfer, a firearm for the purpose of weapons trafficking, they may disclose the information specified in the Act to a law enforcement agency.

Bill C-21 further amended the Act to require that the annual report of the Commissioner of Firearms include information relating to any disclosures made under section 88.1.

The new disclosure mechanism came into force on December 15, 2023, when Bill C-21 received Royal Assent; therefore, this first report covers the period of December 15 to 31, 2023.

Disclosures of licensing and registration information to law enforcement in support of an investigation or prosecution under section 99(1) or 100(1) of the <i>Criminal Code</i>	December 15–31, 2023
The Commissioner of Firearms	0
The Registrar of Firearms	0
Chief Firearms Officers	1

National Day Against Gun Violence

Canada observed the first [National Day Against Gun Violence](#) this year. This day to honour the victims of firearms violence, increase awareness and encourage Canadians to come together to find solutions, will be held on the first Friday of June each year.

Promoting compliance with the firearms regulatory regime

The Canadian Firearms Program administers the *Firearms Act* and related regulations, including the licensing of individuals and businesses through [Chief Firearms Officers](#), and the registration of restricted and prohibited firearms through the Registrar of Firearms. Up-to-date [fees for licences](#) are posted on the Canadian Firearms Program's website.

The Canadian Firearms Program's national firearms safety education and awareness programs are key to the safe use, handling, and storage of firearms. The Canadian Firearms Program also works with partner organizations and provincial/territorial governments to disseminate safety information to firearm owners and users, businesses, manufacturers, and to the general public.

Overseeing firearms licensing and registration

Firearms licensing and registration are the program's public-facing responsibility. These services allow for individual Canadians and businesses, including manufacturers, retail stores, shooting ranges and museums to apply for licences (to possess, carry, buy, sell or display firearms and/or ammunition) and registration certificates.

Chief Firearms Officers are responsible for overseeing certain aspects of the *Firearms Act* in their provincial and territorial jurisdictions, and have discretionary authority to:

- // approve and refuse licensing applications for individuals and businesses;
- // approve and refuse Authorizations to Transport and Authorizations to Carry firearms;
- // approve shooting clubs and ranges;
- // conduct inspections of businesses and shooting ranges;
- // monitor the continuous eligibility of firearms licensees; and
- // revoke licences, authorizations and approvals.

Chief Firearms Officers are responsible for overseeing the delivery of the Canadian Firearms Safety Course and the Canadian Restricted Firearms Safety Course.

The Registrar is responsible for overseeing certain aspect of the *Firearms Act* for all provinces and territories, and has authority to:

- /// approve and refuse registration and transfer applications for individuals and businesses;
- /// approve and refuse carrier licence applications;
- /// issue and refuse licence verification requests;
- /// provide technical support for the verification of firearms;
- /// issue, refuse and revoke designations for firearm verifiers;
- /// verify accuracy of firearms classification information;
- /// process firearms description change requests;
- /// process requests for deactivation, destruction, export and antique status; and
- /// issue Public Agency Identification Numbers and process public agency firearm applications and inventories.

As of December 31, 2023, Canada had:

- /// 2,352,504 valid Possession and Acquisition Licences and 12,222 valid Minor's Licences (Table 1);
- /// 1,296,221 registered firearms — only restricted and prohibited firearms must be registered (Table 10); and
- /// 4,036 licensed firearms businesses, not including museums and carriers. Of these, 1,658 businesses were licensed to sell only ammunition (Table 13).

The tables that follow include data on licensing.

Table 1: Individual firearms licences, by type and province or territory, 2023

Province or territory	Possession and Acquisition Licence	Minor's Licence	Total
Alberta	361,699	2,734	364,433
British Columbia	355,690	1,363	357,053
Manitoba	100,175	806	100,981
New Brunswick	74,380	199	74,579
Newfoundland and Labrador	75,564	492	76,056
Northwest Territories	5,926	29	5,955
Nova Scotia	78,299	583	78,882
Nunavut	3,245	30	3,275
Ontario	667,726	5,212	672,938
Prince Edward Island	6,941	32	6,973
Quebec	494,557	167	494,724
Saskatchewan	119,681	506	120,187
Yukon	8,621	69	8,690
Total	2,352,504	12,222	2,364,726

Table 2 provides a breakdown of Possession and Acquisition Licences year over year, since 2019.

Table 2: Number of Possession and Acquisition Licence holders and Minor's Licence holders, 2019 to 2023

2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
2,219,344	2,206,755	2,245,842	2,272,760	2,364,726

In 2023, the Canadian Firearms Program issued 489,389 Possession and Acquisition Licences (new and renewed) and new Minor's Licences (Table 3).

Table 3: Number of individual licences issued (including new and renewals), 2023

Licence type	2023
Possession and Acquisition Licence	481,914
Minor's Licence	7,475
Total	489,389

In 2023, the Canadian Firearms Program issued 488,343 individual licences, including new licences and renewals for Possession and Acquisition Licences and new Minor's Licences (Table 4).

Table 4: Number of individual licences issued by province or territory, 2023

Province or territory	Acquisition Licence			Minor's Licence			Total		
	New	Renewal	Total PAL	New	Renewal	Total Minor	New	Renewal	Renewal/ New Licences
Alberta	24,839	46,755	71,594	1,514	66	1,580	26,353	46,821	73,174
British Columbia	26,158	45,661	71,819	678	27	705	26,836	45,688	72,524
Manitoba	7,241	12,757	19,998	429	6	435	7,670	12,763	20,433
New Brunswick	4,844	10,712	15,556	137	4	141	4,981	10,716	15,697
Newfoundland and Labrador	3,621	10,968	14,589	305	11	316	3,926	10,979	14,905
Northwest Territories	483	665	1,148	13	0	13	496	665	1,161
Nova Scotia	5,232	10,291	15,523	374	21	395	5,606	10,312	15,918
Nunavut	264	337	601	20	0	20	284	337	621
Ontario	54,991	97,965	152,956	3,272	126	3,398	58,263	98,091	156,354
Prince Edward Island	507	859	1,366	17	1	18	524	860	1,384
Quebec	28,399	62,538	90,937	105	4	109	28,504	62,542	91,046
Saskatchewan	6,832	16,190	23,022	298	10	308	7,130	16,200	23,330
Yukon	642	1,119	1,761	35	0	35	677	1,119	1,796
Canada	164,053	316,817	480,870	7,197	276	7,473	171,250	317,093	488,343

Note: The numbers in this table do not include licensees outside of Canada.

Firearms fall into one of three classes, as defined in section 84(1) of the *Criminal Code*:

- ▮ Non-restricted firearms — typically shotguns and rifles;
- ▮ Restricted firearms — predominantly handguns; and
- ▮ Prohibited firearms — certain handguns and fully automatic or converted automatic firearms.

In 2023, there were 1,560,304 Possession and Acquisition Licences with non-restricted privileges, 752,002 with restricted privileges, and 40,188 with prohibited privileges (Table 5).

Table 5: Possession and Acquisition Licence privileges by province or territory, 2023

Province or territory	Non-restricted	Restricted	Prohibited	Unassigned*	Total PAL
Alberta	183,668	172,348	5,683	0	361,699
British Columbia	177,569	171,188	6,931	2	355,690
Manitoba	68,787	29,933	1,455	0	100,175
New Brunswick	59,965	12,932	1,483	0	74,380
Newfoundland and Labrador	67,778	7,330	455	1	75,564
Northwest Territories	4,756	1,131	39	0	5,926
Nova Scotia	56,931	19,600	1,768	0	78,299
Nunavut	2,926	311	8	0	3,245
Ontario	418,879	234,719	14,126	2	667,726
Prince Edward Island	4,947	1,838	156	0	6,941
Quebec	433,399	55,374	5,779	5	494,557
Saskatchewan	74,349	43,165	2,167	0	119,681
Yukon	6,350	2,133	138	0	8,621
Canada	1,560,304	752,002	40,188	10	2,352,504

Note: Possession and Acquisition Licence holders are able to obtain multiple privileges. These numbers in this table represent the maximum privileges a client holds. These numbers do not include Minor's Licences.

*Unassigned refers to valid licences that currently hold no acquisition privileges. This situation can occur when a licensee transfers their last grandfathered prohibited firearm and the privilege is removed at the time of the approval of the transfer.

In 2023, there were 920 firearms licence applications refused for various public safety reasons (Tables 6 and 7). Under the *Firearms Act*, Chief Firearms Officers are authorized to refuse an application for a firearms licence based on their assessment of the applicant's risk to public safety.

Table 6: Number of firearms licence application refusals, 2019 to 2023

Year	Refusals
2019	946
2020	1,112
2021	1,227
2022	923
2023	920

As part of the Canadian Firearms Program's mandate to promote public safety, firearms licence applicants are screened to assess their eligibility to possess a firearms licence. After a firearms licence is issued, continuous eligibility screening is conducted over the term of the licence. Information of concern that is brought to the attention of a Chief Firearms Officer may bring an individual's eligibility to hold a licence into question. That individual might then be subject to review.

Table 7: Reasons for firearms licence application refusals, 2023

Court ordered prohibition/probation	326
Domestic violence	78
Drug offences	13
Mental health	212
Possession and Acquisition Licence ineligible	11
Potential risk to others	367
Potential risk to self	165
Provided false information	294
Unsafe firearm use and storage	40
Violent behaviour	112

Note: A firearms licence application refusal can be influenced by more than one reason. Therefore, the sum of refusal reasons will exceed the annual total number of firearms licence applications refused.

Under the *Firearms Act*, Chief Firearms Officers are authorized to revoke a firearms licence based on their assessment of the licence holder's risk to public safety. There were 3,127 firearms licences revoked in 2023 (Tables 8 and 9). Similar to licence application refusals, an individual may challenge a licence revocation by applying to a provincial court for a reference hearing, unless the revocation is the result of a court-ordered firearms prohibition. As a result, some of these revocations may have been referred to, or overturned by, the courts since the initial revocation.

Table 8: Number of firearm licence revocations, 2019 to 2023

Year	Revocations
2019	3,232
2020	2,896
2021	3,096
2022	3,315
2023	3,127

Table 9: Reasons for firearms licence revocations, 2023

Court ordered prohibition/probation	1,730
Domestic violence	206
Drug offences	44
Mental health	541
Possession and Acquisition Licence ineligible	99
Potential risk to others	689
Potential risk to self	427
Provided false information	128
Unsafe firearm use and storage	183
Violent behaviour	177

Note: The revocation of a firearms licence can be influenced by more than one reason, therefore the sum of revocation reasons will exceed the annual total of firearms licences revoked.

All restricted and prohibited firearms in Canada possessed by individuals or businesses must be registered. As of December 31, 2023, there were 1,296,221 restricted or prohibited firearms registered to individuals or businesses in Canada (Tables 10 and 11).

Table 10: Firearms registered to individuals or businesses, by class, 2019 to 2023

Firearm class	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Restricted	1,057,418	990,563	1,045,608	1,119,857	1,126,751
Prohibited	178,496	174,551	162,262	165,975	169,470
Total	1,235,914	1,165,114	1,207,870	1,285,832	1,296,221

Table 11: Firearms registered to individuals or businesses in Canada, by class and province or territory, 2023

Province or territory	Restricted	Prohibited	Total
Alberta	232,628	24,022	256,650
British Columbia	217,168	24,809	241,977
Manitoba	38,199	4,782	42,981
New Brunswick	21,006	3,905	24,911
Newfoundland and Labrador	9,143	1,409	10,552
Northwest Territories	1,757	266	2,023
Nova Scotia	29,647	5,489	35,136
Nunavut	351	33	384
Ontario	405,143	70,845	475,988
Prince Edward Island	3,258	732	3,990
Quebec	100,946	25,285	126,231
Saskatchewan	63,201	7,460	70,661
Yukon	3,385	315	3,700
Canada	1,125,832	169,352	1,295,184

Note: The numbers in this table do not include firearms registered outside of Canada.

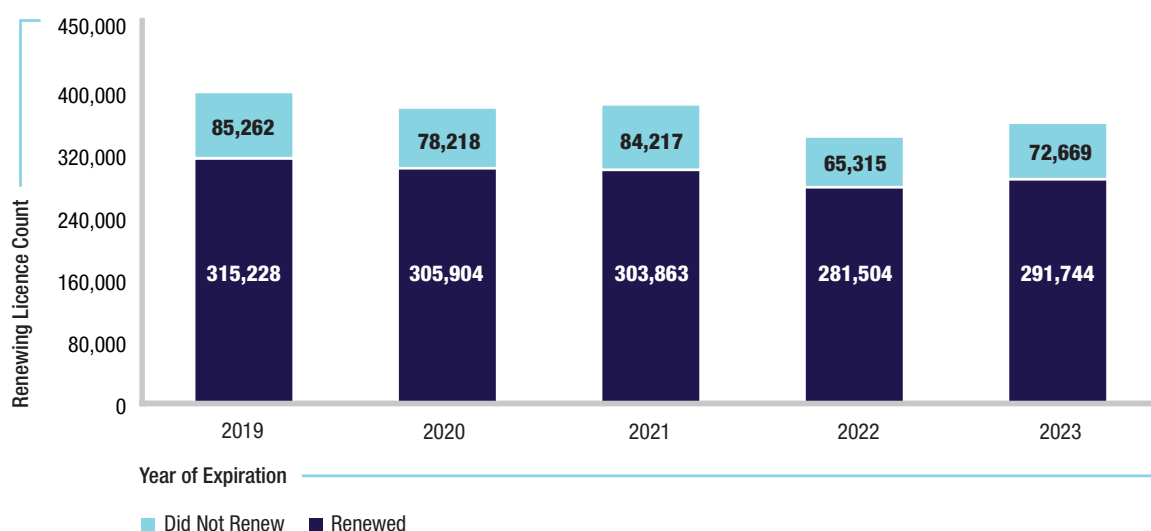
The Registrar of Firearms has the authority to refuse firearm registration applications and revoke registration certificates based on a failure to meet the eligibility criteria under the *Firearms Act*. In 2023, no firearm registration applications were refused and 8,774 firearm registration certificates were revoked (Table 12).

Table 12: Number of registration refusals and revocations, 2019 to 2023

Year	Applications refused	Certificates revoked	Total
2019	8	6,027	6,035
2020	16	4,630	4,646
2021	12	8,021	8,033
2022	11	9,124	9,135
2023	0	8,774	8,774

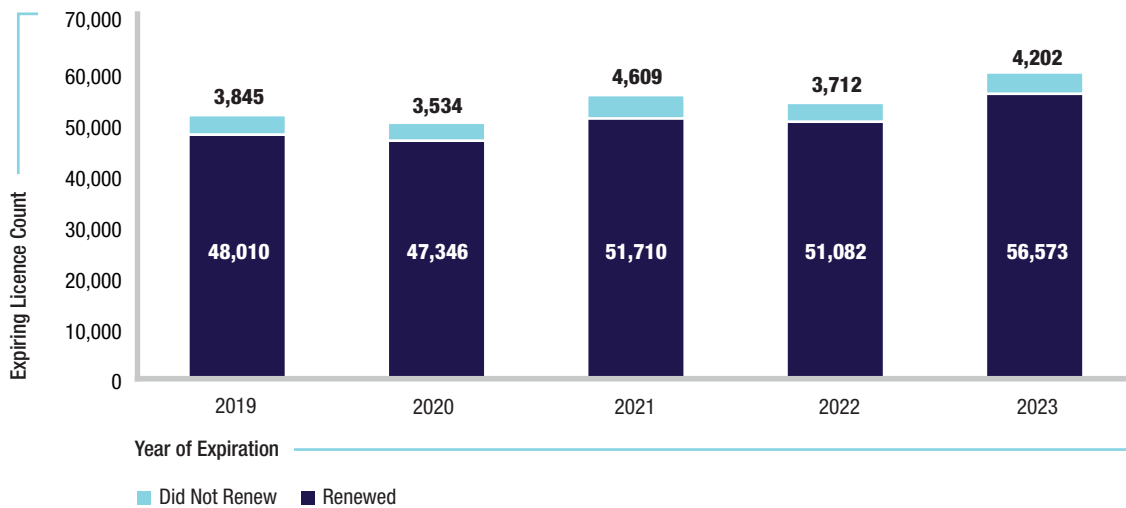
Under the *Firearms Act*, firearms licence holders are responsible for renewing their licences prior to expiry. The Canadian Firearms Program facilitates this process by sending renewal notices to licensees prior to the expiry of their current licence. A total of 364,413 individual Possession and Acquisition Licences expired in 2023 (Chart 1). There were 60,775 expired licences with a restricted or prohibited firearm registered to them at the time of expiration. Of these expired licences, 56,573 licence holders renewed them, but 4,202 licence holders did not (Chart 2).

Chart 1: Firearms licence renewals, 2019 to 2023



Note: When a licence has expired, a registration certificate revocation notice is sent to the licence holder immediately following the end of the extension period. A lack of renewal could be associated with a licence holder having disposed of his/her firearm(s), moved outside Canada, or having passed away.

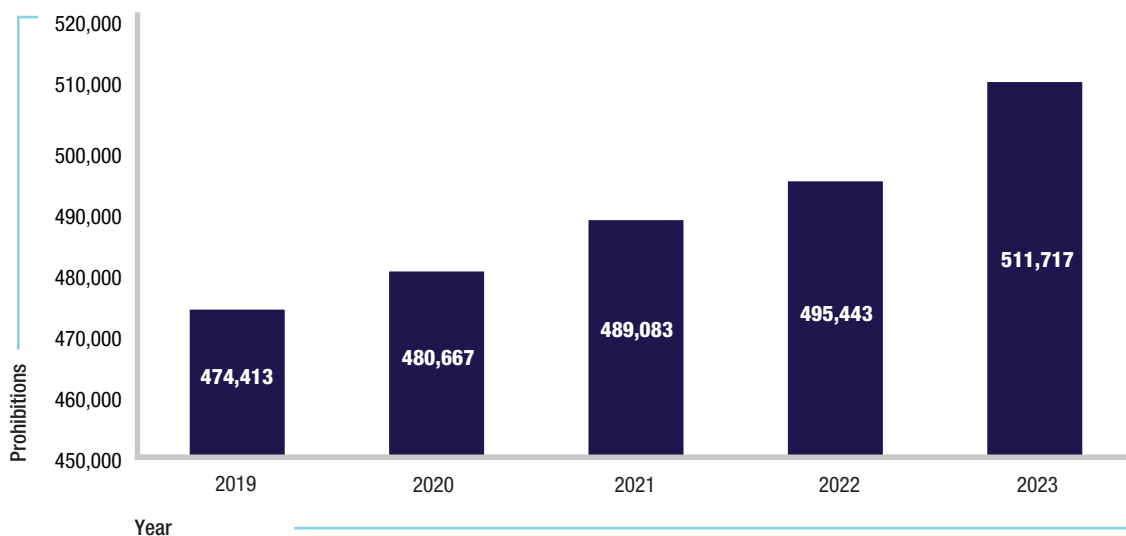
Chart 2: Individual licence renewal with restricted and prohibited privileges and in possession of a registered firearm, 2019 to 2023



Note: When a licence has expired, a registration certificate revocation notice is sent to the licence holder 30 days after the licence expiry date. If there is no change in the licence holder's file within 90 days after the revocation, a report is sent to the police of jurisdiction for follow-up. A lack of renewal could be associated with a licence holder having disposed of his/her firearm(s), moved outside Canada, or passed away.

Under section 89 of the *Firearms Act*, every court, judge, or justice that makes, varies, or revokes a firearms prohibition order must notify the Chief Firearms Officer in their jurisdiction. Firearms licence applicant screening includes checking whether an applicant is subject to a prohibition order. A prohibition order prevents an individual from legally possessing a firearm for a specified period of time and results in the refusal of a firearms licence application or the revocation of a firearms licence. As of December 31, 2023, there were 511,717 individuals prohibited from possessing firearms (Chart 3).

Chart 3: Individuals prohibited from possessing firearms, 2019 to 2023



Note: Prohibition orders are for a specified period of time and can carry over from year to year. The totals reflect ongoing prohibition orders, and not only those that are newly issued.

Source: Statistics from Canadian Police Information Centre.

Reporting on Bill C-71

Bill C-71 updated several aspects of the firearms legislation and received Royal Assent in 2019.

Starting in 2022, individuals and businesses [transferring a non-restricted firearm](#) are required to first obtain a reference number from the Registrar of Firearms (the Registrar). By issuing this reference number, the Registrar is confirming the validity of the firearms licence of the person receiving the firearm (a reference number may be obtained through the Canadian Firearms Program's [web services portals](#)). The Registrar does not collect any information on the non-restricted firearm being transferred.

Licence Verification

Number of reference number requests received in 2023	431,967
Number of reference numbers issued in 2023	425,231
Number of reference number requests refused in 2023	6,736

Note: A reference number may not be issued if, for example, a buyer does not have a valid Possession and Acquisition Licence.

Starting in 2021, licensed owners of registered firearms must apply to a Chief Firearms Officer for an Authorization to Transport a restricted or prohibited firearm to any place other than to (a) an approved shooting club or shooting range within the owner's province of residence, or (b) to the firearm's place of storage after purchase.

Authorizations to Transport

Number of Authorizations to Transport issued to licence holders (not including section 35 non-residents) in 2023	31,558
Of the total of Authorizations to Transport issued to licence holders in 2023, the total number issued for:	
Transport to or from a port of entry (including for purposes of export/import)	779
Transport to a gunsmith	1,920
Transport to a gun show	81
Transport for the purpose of delivering a Canadian Firearms Program-approved restricted firearms safety course	217
Transport to a law enforcement officer, a firearms officer, or a Chief Firearms Officer	122

Maintaining national firearm safety training standards

To be licensed to acquire firearms in Canada, individuals must pass the Canadian Firearms Safety Course before applying for a Possession and Acquisition Licence. The Canadian Firearms Safety Course is designed to apply to the broadest possible spectrum of novice firearms users; as an introductory safety course, it is intended for all new firearms users.

The course emphasizes safe storage, display, transportation, handling and use of firearms but safety depends on more than just safe physical actions. Safe handling must include greater knowledge of the firearms themselves, ammunition and the laws and regulations related to them.

Individuals who wish to acquire restricted firearms must also pass the Canadian Restricted Firearms Safety Course.

The Canadian Firearms Program is responsible for the continued development, implementation, and evaluation of national firearms safety standards, and the content of the Canadian Firearms Safety Course and the Canadian Restricted Firearms Safety Course. Feedback on courses is received regularly by the provinces and territories, national organizations with an ongoing interest in firearms safety and firearms instructors from across Canada.

Promoting compliance by firearms businesses

Businesses form an important part of the Canadian Firearms Program's client base. A business, museum or organization that manufactures, sells, possesses, handles, displays, or stores firearms or ammunition must possess a valid firearms business licence. Employees who handle firearms for these businesses must also possess valid Possession and Acquisitions Licences for the class of firearms being handled, and be listed as employees on the business licence. All restricted and prohibited firearms in a business inventory must be registered. Periodic business inspections are performed to verify safe and lawful business practices, including firearms storage and display. As of December 31, 2023, there were 4,036 firearms businesses in Canada licensed under the *Firearms Act* (Table 13).

Table 13: Valid business licences, 2019 to 2023

Valid business licences	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Business licences	2,456	2,414	2,448	2,428	2,378
Ammunition only	1,981	1,740	1,710	1,663	1,658
All business licences	4,437	4,154	4,158	4,091	4,036

Note: The numbers in this table do not include museums and carriers.

Supporting law enforcement agencies

The Canadian Firearms Program supports domestic and international law enforcement agencies in preventing and investigating firearms-related crimes, and in providing valuable technical and legal advice to the Canadian justice system.

National Weapons Enforcement Support

The National Weapons Enforcement Support Team offers direct support to investigators on all aspects of firearms investigations and prosecutions, and on intelligence sharing with respect to the illegal movement and criminal use of firearms. It provides expert opinion evidence to the court and support to Crown attorneys on firearms law and its application. The team also partners with the Canada Border Services Agency to investigate and intercept illegal firearms entering Canada through border crossings, and partnered with Global Affairs Canada to investigate international firearms sales. In addition to domestic law enforcement partners, the team regularly liaises with international agencies, such as U.S. Homeland Security Investigations and the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, on cross-border smuggling and investigations.

In 2023, the team responded to over 9,500 service calls from Canadian and international law enforcement agencies, regulatory partners or Crown attorneys, which represented a 150% increase since additional funding was received in 2019 from the *Initiative to Take Action Against Gun and Gang Violence* as part of the government's [Gang Violence Prevention and Intervention Investments](#).

In more than 280 sessions across the country, the National Weapons Enforcement Support Team trained 7,018 individuals resulting in a 98% jump in participants and a 96% increase in training sessions since 2019. This advanced training for front-line law enforcement and Crown attorneys, and directly supported public safety.

Northern Ontario training initiative

In April 2023, in partnership with the RCMP Thunder Bay Detachment, Thunder Bay Police Service and the Nishnawbe Aski Police Service, the National Weapons Enforcement Support Team in Ontario traveled to Thunder Bay to provide training to local police, the Ontario Provincial Police, Ministry of Natural Resources and the Canada Border Services Agency officers on topics such as: investigative tools involved in firearm related investigations; firearm law; public safety warrants; firearms analysis; and current trends relating to privately-manufactured firearms, the illicit use of 3D printers, and airsoft adapted firearms.

Crown Attorney Program

This joint endeavour between the Ontario Ministry of the Attorney General and the Firearms Investigative and Enforcement Services Directorate, the Crown Attorney Program seeks to enhance prosecutorial outcomes of firearms-related offences through education, coordination and networking. The Crown Attorney Program is actively involved in building a national network of firearms prosecutors in each province and territory, through which education, training and coordination on firearms-related matters are offered.

Firearms tracing

The Canadian National Firearms Tracing Centre assists front-line policing by providing an extensive firearms tracing service for Canadian, U.S. and international law enforcement agencies and is the only national program that traces firearms domestically and internationally.

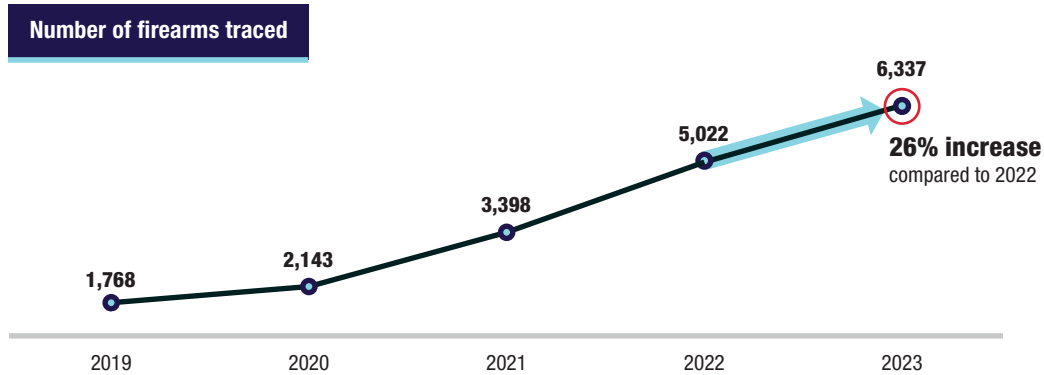
For all trace requests, the tracing centre investigates the history of a firearm, from its manufacture or introduction into commerce by the importer through the distribution chain (wholesalers and retailers) to identify the last known owner or business. The centre also liaises with various international law enforcement partners, including the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives and INTERPOL's Integrated Weapons and Explosives Tracking System.

Firearm tracing provides strategic benefits in the form of linking criminal use of firearms to specific vendors, identifying trafficking routes and patterns. Tracing:

- /// provides linkages between a suspect and a firearm;
- /// flags potential traffickers;
- /// helps identify local, provincial and international firearms crime patterns;
- /// produces invaluable investigative leads; and
- /// provides law enforcement decision makers and government officials with accurate statistical data.

Once again this year, the numbers demonstrate that investments in the Canadian National Firearms Tracing Centre are resulting in the origins of more firearms being traced, in support of trafficking, smuggling and other firearms crime investigations.

In 2023, 6,337 traces were completed by the Canadian National Firearms Tracing Centre, a 26% increase compared to 2022.



The tracing centre also trains front-line police officers and specialized enforcement units on the strategic and tactical benefits of firearms tracing and how it helps to solve crime. It can point the way to other crimes and criminals, sometimes in unexpected way.

The importance of tracing firearms to cross border smuggling investigations

Through the tracing of seized firearms, the Canadian National Firearms Tracing Centre provides the Canada Border Services Agency with valuable intelligence about the movement patterns of illicit firearms across the border and their sources. Timely tracing is important to advance investigations into cross border firearms smuggling on both sides of the border.

The value of tracing can be seen in one December 2023 example where the Canada Border Services Agency executed a search warrant at a residence in Ontario. It seized a loaded firearm and multiple firearm parts, which is indicative of a firearm trafficking operation. Through tracing, the firearm was found to have been stolen from a vehicle in the U.S. four months earlier. The tracing information allowed the Canada Border Services Agency to lay additional charges related to the possession of stolen property, and informed U.S. agencies' investigation into the stolen firearm.

Intelligence and trends from tracing analysis may also identify straw purchasers and smuggling methods, helping to focus border resources on high threat movements. In 2023, the Canada Border Services Agency implemented a new tracing policy that resulted in over 650 firearms being traced. It also created a national tracing repository to facilitate border-related analysis.

Specialized Firearms Support Services

The Specialized Firearms Support Services unit is a centre of expertise for the identification and description of firearms in Canada. The unit is regularly called on to provide technical firearms information, advice and training to domestic and international governments and police services. The unit provides:

- /// overall management and maintenance of the Firearms Reference Table;
- /// digital photography of firearms and prohibited devices;
- /// delivery of training on firearm identification and firearm safety;
- /// firearm inspections and production of reports and affidavits;
- /// support for reference hearings and court proceedings;
- /// maintenance of the national firearms collection;
- /// firearm destruction; and
- /// domestic and international law enforcement agencies and government departments assistance for firearm identification and other technical support.

The team prepares and maintains the [Firearms Reference Table](#) that represents a global centre of expertise for the identification and description of firearms in Canada.

The Firearms Reference Table is a comprehensive, single-source reference tool that helps identify and describe firearms. The reference table is used by domestic and international law enforcement agencies, including 196 INTERPOL member countries. A version of the reference table is also available to the public in Portable Document Format.

The Firearms Reference Table is an administrative document tool, not a legal instrument. The Specialized Firearms Support Services unit maintains the table by conducting technical assessments of firearms based on firearm classifications set out in the *Criminal Code* and supporting regulations; the Firearms Reference Table is the most comprehensive and systematic firearms reference database in existence worldwide.

The Reference Table contains more than 200,000 individual records. In 2023, 3,527 new records were added and 522 records were updated.

In 2023, Specialized Firearms Support Services continued its ongoing role of developing and delivering firearm courses to various law enforcement partners across Canada, providing in-class sessions and supporting workshops for RCMP members. Between in-person and online, over 2,000 individuals received specialized firearms training.

Firearms Internet Investigations Support

Firearms Internet Investigations Support conducts open-source internet investigations to assist Chief Firearms Officers in assessing the eligibility for someone to hold a firearms licence.

Firearms Internet Investigations Support also works with law enforcement agencies at the municipal, regional, provincial/territorial, federal and international levels to assist in ongoing law enforcement firearms investigations.

In 2023, Firearms Internet Investigations Support conducted open-source, internet investigations in response to:

- 62 requests from law enforcement; and
- 196 requests from Chief Firearms Officers and other regulatory authorities.

Looking ahead

Mental Health Strategy

Bill C-21 authorized Chief Firearms Officers to issue an Authorization to Transport for the purpose of storage for mental health reasons. A firearms owner experiencing a mental health crisis or similar problem can now be authorized to transport their restricted or prohibited firearm to another licensed person or business for temporary storage and safekeeping, helping to keep themselves and their loved ones safe.

The Canadian Firearms Program is committed to developing additional tools to promote national consistency and better support Chief Firearms Officers' decision-making when it comes to mental-health related investigations and their assessment of an individual's eligibility to obtain or hold a firearms licence when mental health is a consideration.

Bill C-21

The Canadian Firearms Program will prepare to implement other measures in Bill C-21 that are expected to come into force through Orders in Council, including new licence revocation authorities and the "yellow flag" licence suspension regime.

The CFP will continue to provide firearms owners with the information they need through our website at: <https://www.rcmp.ca/en/firearms>. Public Safety Canada's website provides additional information on what Bill C-21 is and what it means: [A comprehensive strategy to address gun violence and strengthen gun laws in Canada \(publicsafety.gc.ca\)](https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca).

Mass Casualty Commission

The RCMP and the Canadian Firearms Program will continue to address the Mass Casualty Commission's recommendations and provide [updates on the implementation of the recommendations and next steps](#).

Inquiry into the Fatality of Lionel Desmond

The Canadian Firearms Program looks forward to the final report of the Desmond Fatality Inquiry, which is anticipated to be released in 2024.

Northern Services Review

The Canadian Firearms Program will complete its Northern Services Review in 2024.

Additional territorial consultations will inform the identification of gaps and opportunities to improve communications, services and delivery models.

Canadian Firearms Digital Services Solution

Modernization efforts will continue in 2024 with more services moving online, including an expansion of Safety Course Report Portal, and applications for shooting clubs and ranges, businesses and carriers.

By 2026, the objective is to have most paper-based applications and existing online services migrated to the new system.