

Number of small arms (guns) in circulation worldwide today:

Approximately 875 million small arms are in circulation globally¹, and millions more are produced annually by thousands of manufacturers around the world². That's one for every 7 people on the planet.³

How are small arms obtained?

- **Legally:** Gun shops, retail stores, shooting ranges, arms fairs, online
- **Illegally:** Illicit trade and circulation, for example, arms exchanged in criminal networks: and theft from government stockpiles, private security companies, shops, homes and cars.

Consequences of the small arms trade:

- Armed violence — fuelled by small arms — is the leading cause of forced migration and displacement in the world. It is also the leading cause of hunger in the world.
- Inhibition of development — For example, the Inter-American Development Bank estimates that violence costs Latin American countries between 3% and 15% of their GDP.⁴
- Restriction of basic needs — Insecurity affects access to food, water, and shelter, mobility and commerce. Those most in need are the worst affected, as aid agencies withdraw their staff because of the risks.

What else small arms facilitate:

- Drug trafficking, human trafficking
- Sexual violence, HIV transmission
- Wildlife poaching
- Poverty, fear, curtailing of daily activities. In a 2009 Mexican study, 60% of parents said that crime and violence stopped them from allowing their young children to play outside

Economic cost

In the U.S. alone, gun violence cost \$229 billion in 2016 for health care, law enforcement and other costs.⁵

Deaths and injuries

- Every year, armed violence kills around 526,000 people, ¾ in non-conflict settings.⁶
- For every gun death, there are 1-8 times more injuries. Gun violence is the third cause of spinal cord injury in the United States.⁷
- Developing countries with the highest rates of gun violence also have the least support for survivors.
- Secondary survivors (family, friends and colleagues of gun violence victims) suffer health, social, and economic outcomes: trauma, anxiety and the loss of employment, well-being and family connections.

Small arms and gender

- Globally, men and boys accounted for 84% of the people who died violently in 2010–15.⁸ Teenagers and young men are most at risk; women are most at risk of sexual violence.
- Men possess and use most of the world's firearms (more than 90%).
- Guns are used in 30% of femicides worldwide, but in 60% in Brazil, Colombia, Honduras, and Guatemala.⁹

Small arms and domestic violence

- In the US, domestic assaults involving a gun are 12 times more likely to result in death.¹⁰
- Guns are used in about 1/3 of domestic homicides. Domestic violence also involves threats at gunpoint.¹¹
- Gender inequality, cultural acceptance of violence against women, and notions of masculinity that embrace gun possession all combine to create a climate that puts women at risk.

Factors sustaining the small arms trade

- Violent conflict
- Militarization
- Criminal network
- Lack of government infrastructure or capacity

Who owns the world's firearms?¹²

- Civilians: 650 million
- Armed Forces: 200 million
- Law enforcement: 26 million

Important United Nations agreements on small arms and light weapons

Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (PoA)¹³ Adopted in 2001 by all UN Member States, this politically binding agreement sets out a framework to improve national laws and regulations to prevent the illicit trade and uncontrolled circulation of small arms and light weapons, including for their import, export, transit, brokering and stockpile management. The PoA establishes procedures for all States to engage in cooperation and assistance. In 2018, a UN Conference will be held in New York to review the PoA's implementation and consider ways to strengthen it.

International Tracing Instrument (ITI)¹⁴ Adopted in 2005, the ITI was established to bolster the work of the PoA. It requires governments to ensure that weapons are properly marked (serial numbers, country of origin, etc), and it provides a framework for countries to help each other trace weapons recovered from crime or conflict.

Arms Trade Treaty (ATT)¹⁵ The ATT is a legally binding agreement that was adopted by the General Assembly in 2014 for States to regulate the international trade in conventional arms according to high common standards. It covers small arms and light weapons as well as larger arms such as battle tanks, missile systems, combat aircraft and warships. The object and purpose of the ATT is to contribute to international and regional peace; reduce human suffering; and promote cooperation, transparency, and responsible action by and among states.

Each State Party to the ATT must prohibit any transfer that would be used for an international crime or that would violate a treaty to which they are a party. Also, State Parties must consider the likelihood that an export of arms could be used to commit or facilitate a serious violation of international humanitarian or human rights law, or a serious criminal offence under treaties on terrorism and transnational organized crime. If the risk of those outcomes overrides the contribution to peace and security then the State Party must not carry out the export. In assessing the human rights impact transfers, Member States that signed and ratified the ATT must also take into account the risk that the arms will be used to commit or facilitate serious acts of gender based violence or violence against women and children, or be diverted to the illicit market or unauthorized users. As of April 2017, 91 member states have ratified, and another 42 states have signed but not yet ratified the ATT.

The Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, their Parts and Components and Ammunition (Firearms Protocol)¹⁶ Adopted in 2005, the Firearms Protocol is the main legally-binding instrument on firearms and their parts, components and ammunition. It provides a framework to combat and eradicate the illicit manufacture, export, import, and transit of firearms, their parts, components and ammunition, trace them from manufacturer to purchaser and to prevent their diversion into the illegal market, and facilitate the investigation and prosecution of related offences without hampering legitimate transfers.

This paper was prepared for IANSA by Nyonsuabeleah Kollue.

Notes

¹ <http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/weapons-and-markets.html>

² <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-world-firearms-idUSL2834893820070828>

³ <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-world-firearms-idUSL2834893820070828>

⁴ <https://publications.iadb.org/bitstream/handle/11319/8133/The-Costs-of-Crime-and-Violence-New-Evidence-and-Insights-in-Latin-America-and-the-Caribbean.pdf>

⁵ <http://www.businessinsider.com/gun-violence-costs-america-more-than-229-billion-every-year-2015-4>

⁶ <http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/armed-violence.html>

⁷ <http://www.cnn.com/2014/07/08/us/paralyzed-by-gun-violence/>

⁸ http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/fileadmin/docs/H-Research_Notes/SAS-Research-Note-63.pdf

⁹ http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/fileadmin/docs/H-Research_Notes/SAS-Research-Note-14.pdf

¹⁰ <http://smartgunlaws.org/domestic-violence-and-firearms-statistics/>

¹¹ Susan B. Sorenson et al., Weapons in the Lives of Battered Women, 94 Am. J. Pub. Health 1412, 1413 (2004).

¹² http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/fileadmin/docs/H-Research_Notes/SAS-Research-Note-9.pdf

¹³ <http://www.poa-iss.org/Poa/poa.aspx>

¹⁴ <http://www.poa-iss.org/InternationalTracing/InternationalTracing.aspx>

¹⁵ <https://www.un.org/disarmament/convarms/att/>

¹⁶ <http://www.poa-iss.org/FirearmsProtocol/FirearmsProtocol.aspx>