



Evidence assessment

We would respectfully suggest that the data upon which the Home Office appear to be relying in their 14 October 2017 Impact Assessment is flawed in a number of respects.

Firearm Related Homicides

The Impact Assessment states (paragraph 33) that “On average, there were 45 firearm related homicides per year...” The term ‘firearm related homicides’ is not defined, and other independent evidence suggests that the figure of 45 is highly misleading.

The authority in this regard is the ONS report “Focus on violent crime and sexual offences: Homicide”. The ONS latest statistics for homicide were released on 9 February 2017 and can be found at - <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/compendium/focusonviolentcrimeandsexualoffences/yearendingmarch2016/homicide>

The ONS report states:

There were 26 homicides involving a firearm in the year ending March 2016, and in only 1 of these cases was the firearm known to be licensed [our emphasis]. In 18 homicides the firearm was not licensed, and in the remaining 7 homicides it was not known if the firearm was licensed or not

It is difficult to reconcile the official figure of 26 homicides (from a recognized and well respected statistical organization) with the un-attributed figure of 45 ‘firearm related homicides’ given in the Impact Assessment. The ONS only covers England and Wales of course, but these two countries constitute 89% of the UK population (ONS 2016 data from <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/bulletins/annualmidyearpopulationestimates/latest>).

The ONS report makes it clear that over the last 5 years there has been an average of 3.8 homicides per year where a ‘licensed firearm’ was used. This is clearly less than a tenth of the 45 firearm related homicides figure quoted in the Impact Assessment,

even if we adjust that to reflect only the population of England and Wales. (Incidentally, according to the Scottish Government, “Homicide by shooting is relatively rare in Scotland” – source: “Homicide in Scotland 2016-17”; National Statistics Office - <https://beta.gov.scot/publications/homicide-scotland-2016-179781788512367/documents/00525786.pdf>).

Two things become perfectly clear, therefore. Firstly, the figure of 45 ‘firearm related deaths’ must include homicides where a firearm was not the method of homicide. Secondly, the vast majority of ‘firearm related deaths’ must involve illegally held firearms – the data indicates that 91.6% ‘firearm related homicides’ must involve the use of illegally held firearms. A distinction must be made between deaths involving illegally held firearms and those involving licensed firearms. Failure to do so is severely prejudicial to the law-abiding shooting community.

MARS and 50 Calibre Rifles

The impact assessment (paragraph 33) states, “These rifles (MARS and .50 calibre rifles) constitute 0.07% of all registered rifles.” This is, of course, already a very small percentage. However, the document does not distinguish between MARS and .50 calibre.

Furthermore, it is absolutely vital to note that when the ONS use the phrase “homicides where there was a licensed firearm used”, the term “licensed firearm” includes a range of firearm types including shotguns.

According to “Firearm and shotgun certificates in England and Wales financial year ending March 2016” (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/firearm-and-shotgun-certificates-in-england-and-wales-financial-year-ending-march-2016/firearm-and-shotgun-certificates-in-england-and-wales-financial-year-endingmarch-2016>), there were 315,308 registered rifles in England and Wales. Over the same period there were 1,331,563 legitimately owned shotguns.

“Firearm and shotgun certificates in England and Wales financial year ending March 2016” gives us the total number of licensed firearms as follows (extrapolated from the text in section 8.5):

Licensed rifles:	315,308
Licensed shotguns:	1,331,563
Other Firearm types:	223,886

TOTAL “licensed firearms” 1,870,757

The Impact Assessment states (paragraph 8) “Police record 64 .50 calibre rifles are owned by individuals ...” Some .50 calibre rifles will be held by individuals not in England and Wales, but even if we ignore this point, this means that .50 calibre rifles constitute only 0.0034% of all “licensed firearms”.

We have already demonstrated that there is an average of 3.8 homicides per annum involving all licensed firearms. .50 calibre rifles constitute only 0.0034% of all licensed firearms. Therefore, if there was equal distribution of homicide by calibre (and we will later contend that there is not), the risk of homicide involving a .50 calibre rifle is 0.0034% of 3.8 which comes out at 0.00013 homicides per annum.

The Impact Assessment states, “ ... the policy would need to prevent three homicides over the next ten years to break even...” These figures demonstrate that over a 10 year period (accepting a flawed assumption of equal distribution of homicide by calibre) the proposal would prevent 0.0013 homicides. A better way of stating this would be to say that, at best, it would take 7,692 years for the ban to prevent one death – this is longer than the span of recorded history.

These data demonstrate that the risk of a UK citizen suffering homicide as a result of a legally held, licensed .50 calibre rifle is, to all intents and purposes, nil.

Equal Distribution of Homicide by Calibre

We are aware of no evidence from anywhere in the world where a legally held .50 calibre rifle has been used in a civilian shooting incident. Indeed, we would suggest that if an individual was intent on using a firearm for nefarious purposes the .50 calibre rifle would be an extremely poor choice of firearm for such purposes. It is an extremely large and heavy item which is difficult to carry. Our members usually have to drive their vehicles to the firing point of the rifle range and have to spend some time unloading their equipment because of the arduous nature of the task. The .50 calibre rifle is unwieldy and conspicuous. One cannot carry more than a handful of rounds of ammunition. All of these factors would render the hypothetical shooter virtually immobile. Furthermore, the recoil from the rifle precludes the possibility of a potential shooter being able to fire rapidly - some ‘recovery time’ between shots is required.

In all the many cases (here and around the world) where there have been civilian ‘firearm related homicides’, can the Home Office cite a single case when the shooter has chosen to use a .50 calibre rifle?

Author: Dr. Steven Milne. FCSA member.