



Should the firearms laws be tightened?

Whenever there is an offence involving firearms the question of the adequacy of the firearms registration laws comes up for discussion. The shooting of a Police Officer in Napier last year, and the subsequent suicide of the gunman, who was found to be unlicensed and to have a large number of guns, including military-style semi-automatic weapons, rekindled the debate.

The Firearms Act 1983, amended in 1982 after the Aramoana killings, provides that owners must be registered. The earlier legislation required each individual firearm to be registered. It has often been suggested that requiring each firearm to be registered would be an improvement on current legislation.

Research New Zealand decided to put this proposition to the test in its September Omnibus Survey of New Zealanders.

- 1. At present New Zealand firearms laws require that owners of firearms must be registered. Once you are a registered firearms owner, you are allowed to have any number of guns, provided they can legally be owned by a private individual. In your opinion, should the firearms laws be changed so that each individual firearm has to be registered?*
- 2. Semi-automatic military-style firearms are currently permitted in New Zealand. A semi-automatic firearm is one that will fire every time the trigger is pulled so long as there is ammunition in the magazine. In your opinion, should the sale of semi-automatic guns be permitted in New Zealand?*

There is overwhelming support for the registration of each individual gun owned by a licensed firearms owner. Some 83 percent were in favour of this, females more so than males at 87 percent as against 79 percent. Older respondents were more in favour than younger respondents. Among those in the age group 55+ years, 87 percent were in favour compared with 81 percent of people in the 15 – 34 year age group.

There were no marked differences by ethnicity. However, those living in the South Island were in favour of banning semi-automatic military-style firearms to a slightly greater extent than those living in the Lower/Central North Island. (86 percent compared with 80 percent). When considered by income, there were no marked differences in opinion between the various income groups.

When it comes to semi-automatic military-style firearms, 25 percent of the respondents felt they should be permitted, while 72 percent felt they should not. 82 percent of females as against 61 percent of males felt they should **not** be permitted. 'Clearly, there is very



strong opposition to private individuals owning semi-automatic, military-style firearms, said Research New Zealand Director, Emanuel Kalafatelis’.

Older respondents felt to a greater extent than younger people that semi-automatic military-style firearms should not be permitted. 81 percent in the age group 55+ years felt this way, while in the age group 15-34 years, 60 percent supported a ban on this type of firearm.

Maori and Pacific Peoples were less in favour of such a ban at 64 percent, versus 74 percent of NZ Europeans/Pakeha and 73 percent of other ethnicities. There were no differences by area. However, those on incomes of \$40,000 – \$69,999, were less in favour of banning semi-automatic military-style firearms (64 percent) than those on lower or higher incomes (74 percent of those earning less than \$40,000, and 76 percent of those earning \$70,000 or more).

The Research New Zealand poll of 500 people aged 15 and over was conducted by telephone between 14 and 22 September. The maximum margin of error for the sample as a whole is +/- 4.8 % (at the 95% confidence level). The data has been weighted to ensure it is an accurate representation of New Zealand's general population. The poll was not taken on behalf of any organization, but as part of Research New Zealand's monthly survey of attitudes and opinions.

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Table 1:

Q6. In your opinion, should the firearms laws be changed so that each individual firearm has to be registered?

	Base =	Total	Male	Female
		500	250	250
		%	%	%
Yes		83	79	87
No		15	19	11
Don't know/no opinion		2	2	1
Total		100	100	100

Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Table 2:

Q6. In your opinion, should the firearms laws be changed so that each individual firearm has to be registered?

	Base =	Total	15-34 years	35 to 54 years	55 years and over
		500	104	170	226
		%	%	%	%
Yes		83	81	82	87
No		15	17	16	11
Don't know/no opinion		2	2	2	1
Total		100	100	100	100

Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Table 3:

Q6. In your opinion, should the firearms laws be changed so that each individual firearm has to be registered?

	Base =	Total	NZ European/		
		500	Pakeha	Maori/Pacific	Other
		%	363	75	62
		%	%	%	%
Yes		83	84	81	84
No		15	15	17	12
Don't know/no opinion		2	1	2	3
Total		100	100	100	100

Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.



Table 4:

Q6. In your opinion, should the firearms laws be changed so that each individual firearm has to be registered?

	Total	Upper North Island	Lower/Central North Island	South Island
Base =	500	221	116	163
	%	%	%	%
Yes	83	83	80	86
No	15	16	17	13
Don't know/no opinion	2	1	4	1
Total	100	100	100	100

Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Table 5:

Q6. In your opinion, should the firearms laws be changed so that each individual firearm has to be registered?

	Total	Under \$40,000	\$40,000 - \$69,999	\$70,000 plus	Don't know/refused
Base =	500	188	107	156	49
	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	83	85	85	83	73
No	15	15	13	14	24
Don't know/no opinion	2	1	2	2	3
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Table 6:

Q7. In your opinion, should the sale of semi-automatic guns be permitted in New Zealand?

	Total	Male	Female
Base =	500	250	250
	%	%	%
Yes	25	36	14
No	72	61	82
Don't know	4	3	4
Total	100	100	100

Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.



Table 7:

Q7. In your opinion, should the sale of semi-automatic guns be permitted in New Zealand?

	Base =	Total	15-34 years	35 to 54 years	55 years and over
		500	104	170	226
		%	%	%	%
Yes		25	36	22	14
No		72	60	75	81
Don't know		4	3	3	4
Total		100	100	100	100

Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Table 8:

Q7. In your opinion, should the sale of semi-automatic guns be permitted in New Zealand?

	Base =	Total	NZ European/ Pakeha		
		500	363	75	62
		%	%	%	%
Yes		25	23	36	19
No		72	74	64	73
Don't know		4	4	1	8
Total		100	100	100	100

Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Table 9:

Q7. In your opinion, should the sale of semi-automatic guns be permitted in New Zealand?

	Base =	Total	Upper North Island	Lower/Central North Island	South Island
		500	221	116	163
		%	%	%	%
Yes		25	24	23	26
No		72	71	74	71
Don't know		4	4	3	3
Total		100	100	100	100

Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.



Table 10:

Q7. In your opinion, should the sale of semi-automatic guns be permitted in New Zealand?

	Total	Under \$40,000	\$40,000 - \$69,999	\$70,000 plus	Don't know/refuse d
Base =	500 %	188 %	107 %	156 %	49 %
Yes	25	23	31	21	29
No	72	74	64	76	70
Don't know	4	3	5	4	1
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

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