



actually re-exported at some future date, possibly after repair or upgrading. In the absence of a detailed official report on Bulgarian arms exports and imports, it is not possible to say what fraction of the weapons identified in Annex F have been re-exported, or to identify any trends.

2 Small Arms Impact Survey (SAIS)

2.1 Firearms injuries

The research team sought information on firearm injuries from a number of different sources in order to measure the impact of SALW on public health, including hospital and police records and media reports. Of all these sources, figures held by the NSI (compiled using information provided by municipal authorities) proved the most useful. A review of media reports of firearms injuries revealed little new information since the media rely heavily on official police statements.

Record keeping and information sharing within the public health system itself is patchy at best and no reliable data on firearm injuries could be recovered from hospital records. When hospitals receive a patient with a gunshot wound, the case is recorded only in terms of the physical injury sustained, eg 'fracture', or 'torn ligament'.¹⁶³ However, most (though not all) hospitals have a police officer on 24 hour duty, to whom all firearm-related injuries incidents are to be reported. When this happens, the police record the case and categorise it as either fatal, non-fatal, or suicide (neither the police or NSI offer a breakdown of recorded firearm injuries by the type of physical injury). Interviews with medical staff suggested one reason why police data may be less complete than NSI data – there may be occasions when the patient himself prefers not to involve the police, possibly because the injury is related to a criminal act. Provided he or she can convince the hospital staff and duty police officer not to make a report, (eg by offering a bribe), the incident will go unrecorded. A final reason may be that suicides by military personnel are recorded by the NSI but not the police, because they come under the jurisdiction of the military rather than civilian police.¹⁶⁴



Photo 8: Gun safes on display at a trade fair in Sofia, September 2004.

Saferworld, 2004.

2.1.1 Non-fatal injuries

According to police data, during 2003 the police registered 42 accidental firearm injuries. The larger part of them (27) were inflicted with legally owned arms and 15 with illegal ones. In addition, there were 35 firearm injuries that were classified as criminal acts, of which 19 were committed with registered weapons, and the other 16 with illegal ones. It is not clear from the available data what part of the accidental injuries were self-inflicted. From Table 21 one can see that after an increase between 1999 and 2001, non-fatal firearms injury rates have fallen back to their 1999 levels. It is interesting to note that despite the increasing number of registered weapons available within the country, the occurrence of firearm injuries has not increased proportionally. One possible explanation is that the mandatory firearm-handling training courses which all registered firearm users have to pass and the storage precautions they are required to take, are paying dividends. The research team attempted to find out to what extent the laws on domestic weapons storage are followed but could not reach any firm conclusions on the basis of the information available. While HHS respondents appeared well aware of safe storage practices (see Section 3.3), interviews with weapon owners indicated that many are not equipped with metal safes.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶³ Telephone interviews with hospital staff, see Annex G.

¹⁶⁴ *Sega*, 24 January 2004.

¹⁶⁵ Interviews with weapon owners September – November 2004.



While media coverage of firearms incidents offers no new statistical information, it does provide a profile of the individuals involved in reported firearms incidents, both victims and perpetrators. It is important to note though that the media tends to focus much more on cases related to organised crime, so it is not wise to draw general conclusions about the typical victim of non-fatal shootings from this source. An analysis of media reports for the 2002 – 2003 period showed that most victims of shootings are males aged between 20 and 30 years. The majority of them are involved in illegal activities, generally drug dealing. In most cases the weapons used were illegal, though this was not exclusively the case. Makarov pistols were used in a large majority of cases. During 2003, several shootings were carried out with Kalashnikov assault rifles. These cases all had clear mafia overtones. The commonest type of injury reported by the media was shooting in the legs.

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Number of recorded incidents	75	87	102	75	77

Table 21: Firearms injuries (1999 – 2003),¹⁶⁶

2.1.2 Fatal injuries

Statistical information on fatal injuries was available both from NSI and police records. An attempt to cross-reference the statistics showed discrepancies in the two data sets, with police records typically registering fewer incidents (this may be due to the difficulty that those compiling the original data will have had in distinguishing between accidental firearm fatalities and suicides). Police data on fatal injuries, as opposed to suicides, has been collected over a longer period, and is shown below.

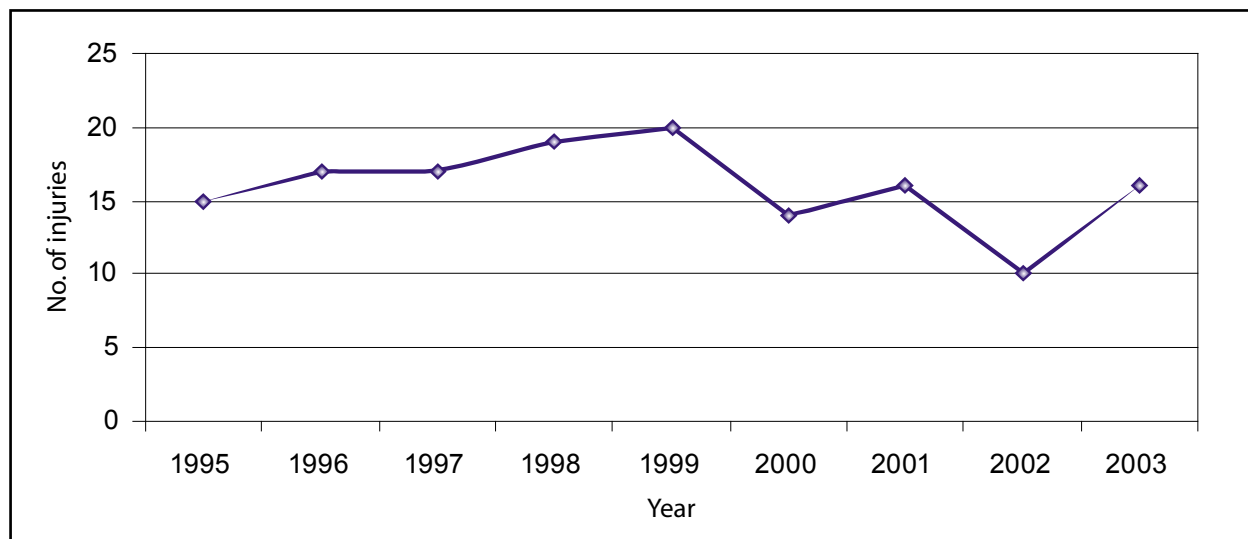


Figure 7: Number of reported fatal firearm injuries (excluding those categorised as suicides),¹⁶⁷

An analysis of police and NSI data shows that in contrast to murders, most suicides are committed with legally-owned guns. Discrepancies between police and NSI data are again apparent here for reasons explained above. Although the number of annual suicides has remained stable over the last few years, the proportion which are committed with firearms has increased (see Figure 8 below). No other obvious variables account for this increase, so it is reasonable to attribute the increased use of firearms in suicides to their wider availability among the general population.

¹⁶⁶ Source: Mol, NPS.

¹⁶⁷ Source: NSI.

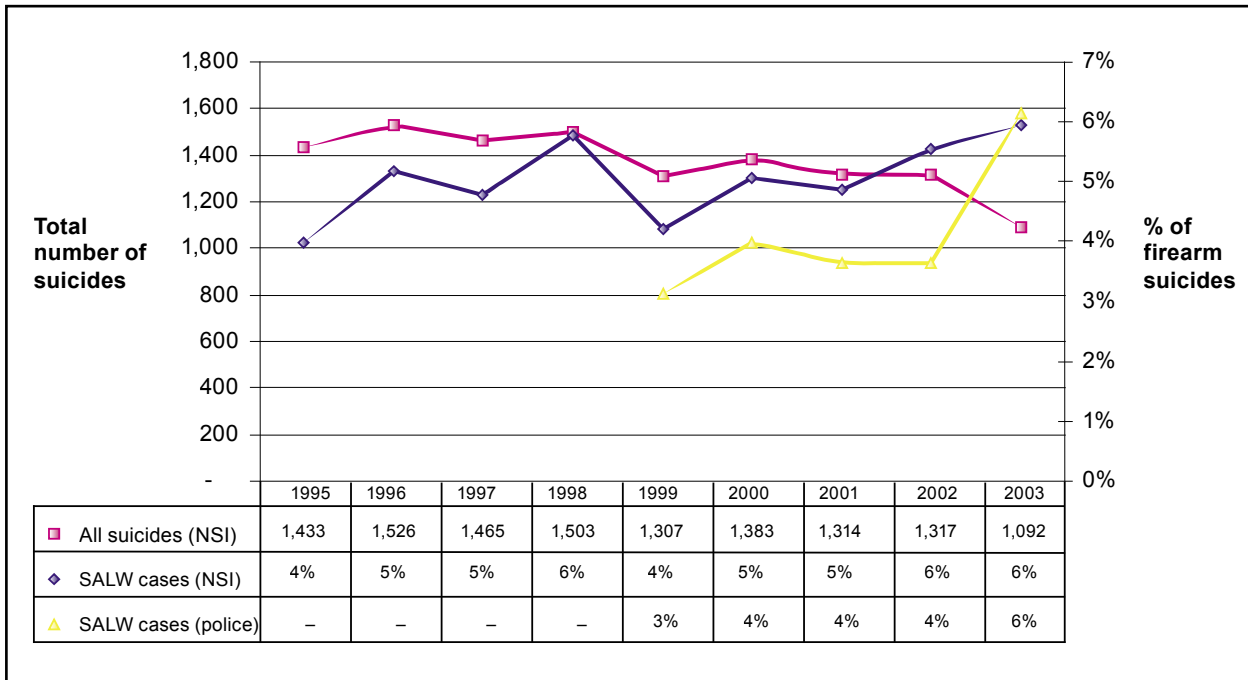


Figure 8: Firearm suicides as a percentage of overall suicides.¹⁶⁸

Males appear to make up a far larger proportion of firearm suicide victims than females do. This is probably accounted for by the fact that most registered firearm owners are male (registered owners will know where their weapons are stored, and be trained in their use). Among women the rate of firearm suicides appears roughly constant from 1995 – 2003, with a slight decrease from 2000 onwards.

Overall, Bulgaria's firearm suicide rate per 100,000 people remains low in comparison to most other countries. This is understandable given that per capita firearms ownership is still low in comparative terms.

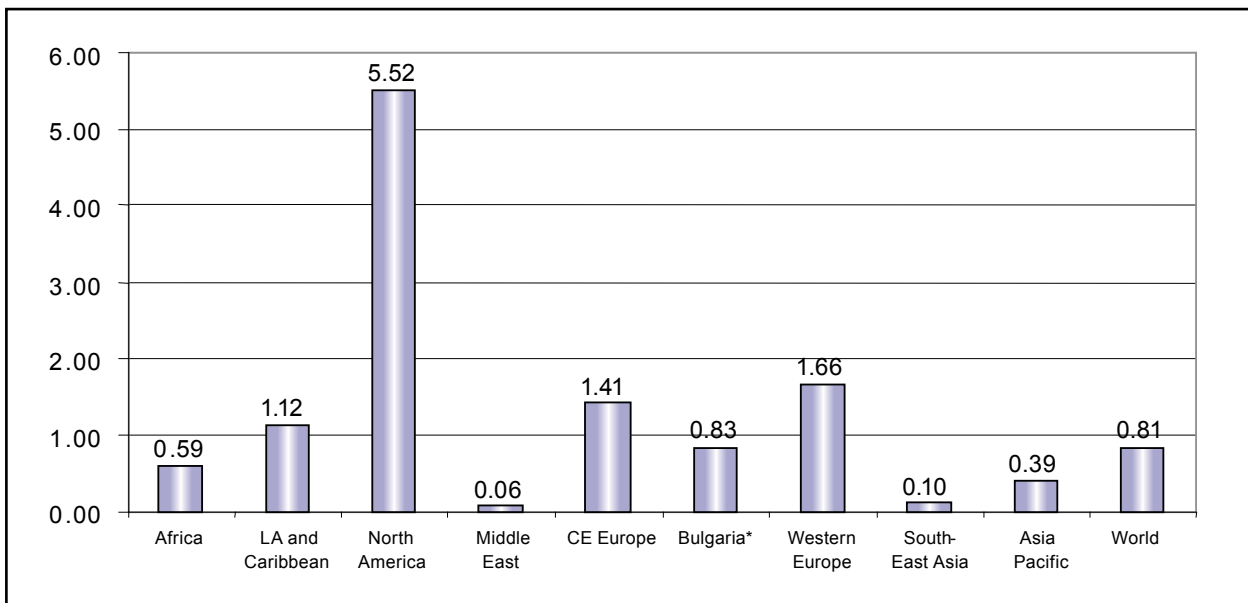


Figure 9: Firearm suicide rate (per 100,000 people).¹⁶⁹

Note: Although there is some variation, the data for other countries is generally for the period 1997–1999.

¹⁶⁸ Sources: NSI and Mol, NPS.

¹⁶⁹ Source: The figures for Bulgaria are for 2003 and are based on NSI data. Data on other countries is from WHO, 2002.



2.2 Crime attributed to SALW

According to police data, there has been a gradual reduction in recorded crime in Bulgaria between 1998 and 2003. This can be attributed to a number of factors, among them demographics, reporting patterns and the economic situation. Between 2000 and 2003 overall unemployment in the country dropped from approximately 18 percent to 13 percent (the downward trend was particularly strong among young people.)¹⁷⁰ The relationship between crime and unemployment has been noted in various studies worldwide¹⁷¹ and the relationship between murder and unemployment is notably strong in Bulgaria. As official statistics and a media review of reported murders between 2003 – 2004 both show, the social group most likely to commit murder in Bulgaria is young unemployed males. Reduced unemployment among this group is therefore likely to have had a beneficial effect on crime levels.

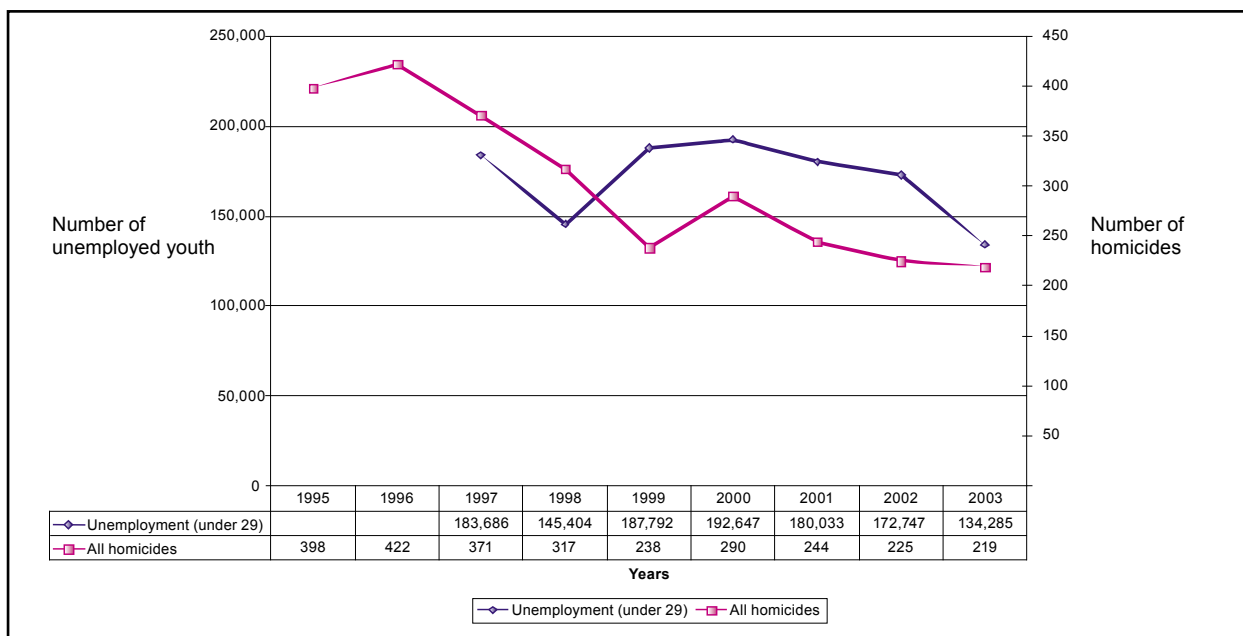


Figure 10: Homicides and youth unemployment.¹⁷²

The second important factor at work in driving crime rates downward is demographics. Bulgaria's population has been rapidly ageing and declining during the period 1990 – 2003, dropping from around 8.7m to 7.7m people. Low birth rates and a high emigration rate among people under 35 years of age are the causes of this decline. Among these emigrants have been criminals, who, like their law-abiding fellow citizens, have sought opportunities in Western countries.¹⁷³

In view of the decrease in recorded crime between 1998 – 2002, this section concentrates more on trends in gun-crime statistics than absolute numbers of crimes. Figure 11 below shows the average number of gun crimes (crimes in which firearms were used) per 100,000 persons that occurred each year in the different regions of the country over the same period. It shows that two regions have a notably high occurrence of gun crimes in comparison to the rest of the country – Sofia-region (not to be confused with Sofia-city) and Pleven. A possible explanation for the higher incidence of gun crime in these regions may lie with the activities of organised crime groups which are known to have a strong presence in both areas.

In order to determine whether there is a link in Bulgaria between rates of gun crime and the availability of SALW, the research team examined the correlation between the number of gun crimes in the different administrative

¹⁷⁰ National Employment Agency <<http://www.nsz.government.bg>>.

¹⁷¹ See for example Raphael, 2001.

¹⁷² Sources: NSI/Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, National Employment Agency.

¹⁷³ *Deutsche Welle*, 27 November 2003; *Monitor*, 22 September 2003; *Dnevnik*, 14 November 2002.



regions and: (a) the number of registered firearms in a specific region, (b) the number of confiscated illegal/stolen firearms in the region (as a proxy for the number of illegal weapons there). The statistical analysis shows that the incidence of firearms crimes has a stronger correlation with the number of the registered weapons in the regions than with the number of confiscated illegal weapons. Yet data provided by the CHDO shows that more crimes are committed with illegal weapons. One possible explanation is that the number of confiscated illegal weapons in the different regions is not a good proxy for the real distribution of illegal weapons, perhaps because the efficiency of police forces in seizing illegal weapons varies across the country. Another possible explanation for the observed stronger relationship with the number of registered weapons is that most unsolved gun crimes are actually committed with registered weapons. Nevertheless, the strong relationship shows that there is a clear link between the crimes committed with firearms and the number of registered weapons in the different parts of the country. A recent event serves to reinforce the point: in January 2005, police arrested 49 people believed to be connected to a prostitution ring in the town of Pamporovo. Altogether the group was found to be in possession of eleven registered pistols. When this fact came to light, the Mol's Chief Secretary demoted the directors of the CHDO in three district police departments in the Plovdiv region, on the grounds that their offices had issued weapons permits to people with criminal records.¹⁷⁴

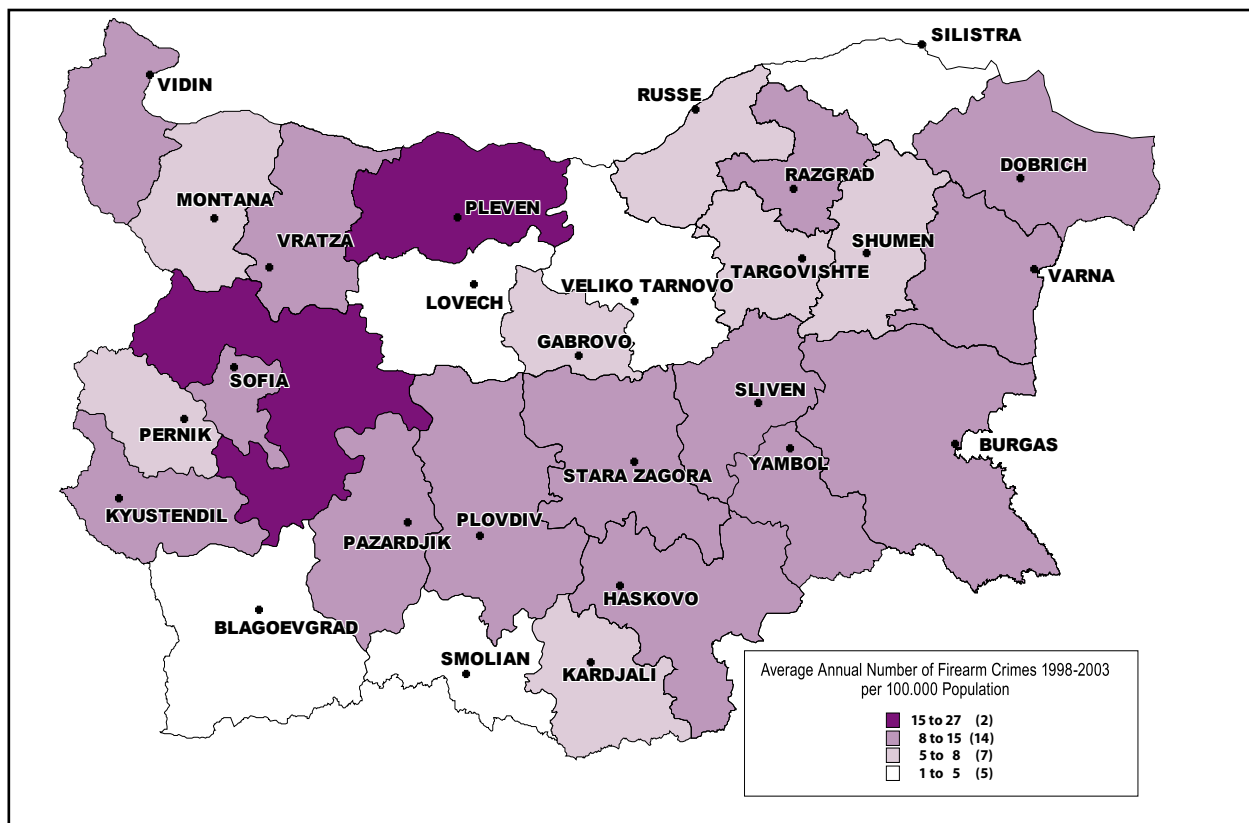


Figure 11: Average annual number of gun crimes per 100,000 persons (1998–2003).¹⁷⁵

2.2.1 Illicit possession, production and trade in SALW

The illegal possession, production or trade in firearms, ammunition and explosives are covered by Penal Code Articles 337 and 339. As Table 22 shows, in recent years the trend with respect to all crimes under Articles 337 and 339 has been in keeping with the general crime trend. After a sharp increase that resulted in 1,511 registered cases in 1996, the number of recorded crimes of this type had fallen almost by half by 2000. Fluctuations for the next three years pointed to no significant change. As the table also shows, between 1998 and 2003, the share of the proportion of crimes recorded under these articles which featured only weapons has increased.

¹⁷⁴ Banker, 22 January 2005.

¹⁷⁵ Source: Mol, NPS.



	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004 (6 mo.)
Article 337 & 339	1,511	1,283	1,207	1,083	743	829	628	702	538
Firearms only	-	-	166	154	105	127	150	189	-

Table 22: Number of reported crimes involving illegal manufacturing, trade, transportation, or possession of arms.¹⁷⁶

Box 7: Demographic profile of offenders

It is interesting to note the perpetrators of crimes involving the illegal manufacturing, trade, transportation or possession of arms in Bulgaria, is quite different from that of other crimes. Firstly, 99 percent of all offenders are males as against 95 percent for all other crimes. More unusual still is the age structure of the offending group. Police records show that on average, 62.3 percent of all crimes are committed by individuals between the ages of 14 and 29. However, this age group constitutes only 23 percent of the perpetrators charged under Articles 337 and 339 of Bulgaria's Penal Code. Also, individuals over 50 years of age generally commit only 5 percent of recorded crimes, while they commit 28 percent of crimes related to the illegal possession of crime weapons. One plausible explanation for the observed differences is that a large proportion of the offenders are ex-factory workers who have resorted to illegally manufacturing and selling weapons and are now aged between 50 and 60 years. The recidivism rate for this group is also somewhat lower than for other crimes – 77 percent of the perpetrators are first-time offenders, while for all other crimes the average is 65 percent.

Table 23 below gives a detailed comparison of all categories of gun crime for 2002–3. The types of crime included in the table are those in which the use of weapons is a significant element, or has an important social impact, viz homicide, property-crimes, hooliganism, as well the 'illegal manufacturing, possession and storage of firearms, explosives, and ammunition'. From the table below it is obvious that the two important categories that need to be examined are armed robberies and homicides. Here the non-reporting of crimes is an important element. However, while Crime Victimization surveys, such as those ones conducted by Vitoshka Research (2002 and 2004) show that some part of the gun crimes that occur in Bulgaria go unreported, the data set does not support statistically valid conclusions about the extent of the problem.

GUN CRIME AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL CRIME *						
CRIME AS CLASSIFIED BY PENAL CODE ARTICLES	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Homicide (Article 115-127)	19.09%	14.56%	14.95%	13.83%	19.07%	20.85%
Attempted murder (Article 115-116-,118)	13.36%	14.50%	28.07%	22.53%	23.46%	21.94%
Deliberate serious bodily harm (Article 128, 131, Par.1.5)	4.21%	2.21%	9.88%	8.54%	6.59%	4.49%
Robbery (Article 198-200, excl. motor vehicles)	4.49%	4.31%	6.53%	5.84%	2.71%	2.15%
Illegal Production, Possession, and Use of Firearms, Ammunition, and Explosives (this is the percentage of firearms within the entire category)	12.92%	13.95%	13.34%	13.20%	15.45%	17.06%
Gun crimes as a percentage of all crimes	0.54%	0.55%	0.56%	0.55%	0.47%	0.49%

Table 23: Gun crime as a percentage of total crime (1998–2003).¹⁷⁷

Note: Percentages are for particular entries under the Penal Code. So, eg in 1998, SALW were used in 19.09 percent of all crimes ascribed to violations of Articles 115-127 of the Code. The final row shows in what percentage of all recorded crimes SALW were used. Several facts should be borne in mind when using the above data. Firstly, while latency for non-gun-related crime has increased slightly for the 2001 - 2004 period, there is no evidence that this is the case for gun-crime. Since latency for other types of crime included in the table (eg murder, armed robbery), are also thought to be low or insignificant, the observed changes, may be viewed as realistic.

¹⁷⁶ Source: Mol, NPS. These crimes refer to the crimes registered under the Penal Code Articles 337 to 339. Article 337 includes the illegal manufacturing, storage, sale, transportation, import, export of all arms and explosives. Article 338 includes the storage or transportation of arms and explosives without the mandatory safety measures. There are only a few cases under this article. Article 339 includes the illegal possession of arms and explosives.

¹⁷⁷ Source: Analysis based on data from Mol, NPS. A more extensive version of this table, which includes data for other crimes over a longer period is available from Center for the Study of Democracy, <<http://www.csd.bg/en/euro/arms.php>>.



Finally, it is worth noting that the above data and analyses depend for their veracity on reporting patterns and police systems for collecting and managing data. Perhaps the most important consideration is what proportion of actual crime goes unreported. A number of surveys have indicated that Bulgaria's levels of unreported crime are low compared to that of the USA and much of Western Europe.¹⁷⁸ However, recent studies conducted by CSD have shown that the latency rate for reported crime actually increased during the above period.¹⁷⁹ If other factors remain the same, as people become less inclined to report crimes to the police, official statistics tend to register a decrease in crime levels anyway. One of the main factors that determines the public's propensity to report crimes is their level of confidence in the police, a topic which is covered in more detail in Section 3.2.

2.2.2 Homicide

Firearm homicides represent a significant share of all homicides in Bulgaria and the proportion of murders committed with a firearm has been on the increase since 1999. The information presented below in Table 24 is based on a comparison of NSI and police data. While the police data is based on reports from district police departments, the NSI data is compiled using death certificates, which are filled out by registered doctors. These certificates are sent to the municipality where a statistical database is kept and the NSI then collects data from municipalities around the country.¹⁸⁰ Unfortunately these two data sets do not agree, not only on the total number of homicides but particularly with respect to firearm homicide. As previously noted, this is likely to be because cases that involve military personnel are subject to the military court system and will not appear in police statistics. Besides the NSI, no other state body collects homicide information from all sources. Other possible reasons for discrepancies would include cases where medical staff report the death as a homicide, but the death is re-categorised (eg as a suicide), following a post-mortem.¹⁸¹

Table 24 below shows the official annual homicide rate in Bulgaria per 100,000 people. It shows that while absolute numbers of both homicides and firearms homicides have been decreasing in line with the general population decline in recent years, the percentage decrease per head of population has been much lower for firearm homicide than the general homicide rate (12 or 28 percent depending on whether NSI or police data are used).

YEAR	POPULATION	NSI DATA				POLICE DATA			
		NO. OF HOMICIDES	HOMICIDE RATE	NO. OF FIREARM HOMICIDES	FIREARM HOMICIDE RATE	NO. OF HOMICIDES	HOMICIDE RATE	NO. OF FIREARM HOMICIDES	FIREARM HOMICIDE RATE
1998	8,256,800	317	3.84	88	1.07	351	4.25	67	0.81
1999	8,210,600	238	2.90	51	0.62	309	3.76	45	0.55
2000	8,170,200	290	3.55	70	0.86	301	3.68	45	0.55
2001	7,913,300	244	3.08	73	0.92	282	3.56	39	0.49
2002	7,868,900	225	2.86	65	0.83	221	2.81	45	0.57
2003	7,750,000	219	2.83	74	0.95	192	2.48	49	0.63
Percentage change 1998-2003			-36%		-12%		-87%		-28%

Table 24: Firearm homicide and homicide rate per 100,000 people.¹⁸²

At 0.95 per 100,000 people the Bulgarian firearm homicide rate is much below that of other Central and Eastern European countries.¹⁸³ The comparative figures do, however, include the countries of the former Yugoslavia and

¹⁷⁸ A commonly advanced explanation is the enduring habits of the Communist period, during which people were strongly encouraged to report all suspicious activities, whether criminal, or merely anti-social.

¹⁷⁹ CSD, 2002.

¹⁸⁰ Order No. 16 from 21 August, 1996 on the Organisation of Hospital Medical Care in State Hospitals, State Gazette No. 76 from 06 September, 1996.

¹⁸¹ Interview, Kolev, 23 November 2004.

¹⁸² Source: NSI/Mol, NPS.

¹⁸³ SAS 2004, pp199-200.



Soviet Union, where violent conflicts and ethnic tensions in several states have resulted in high overall firearm homicide rates. It should be noted that Bulgaria's firearm homicide rate is still more than twice that of Western Europe.

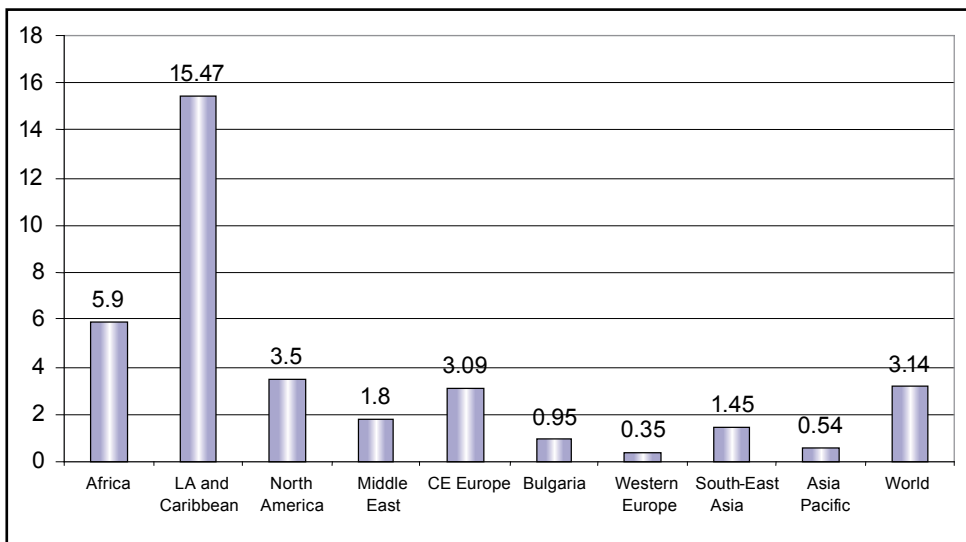


Figure 12: Firearm homicide rate (per 100,000 people).¹⁸⁴

2.2.2.1 Youth and firearm crime

One worrying trend is a gradual increase in the number of young victims of firearm crime during the last five years, particularly 16–18 year olds (see Figure 13). The two graphs below show the total number of under-18s who have fallen victim to crime, or who have participated in gun crimes from 1998 - 2003. Although the graphs show an increase in the number of young victims over the period, the number of perpetrators has remained relatively stable. The total number of under-18s reported as having been victims of gun crime has also remained small.

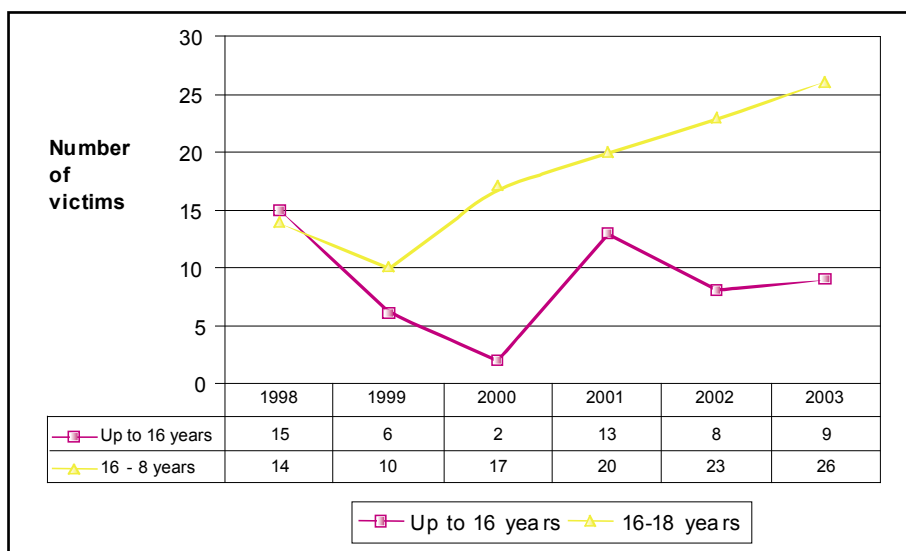


Figure 13: Number of under-18's reported as having been victims of gun crime.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁴ Source: Data on world regions is from WHO, 2002. Data on regions varies by country but is generally 1997 – 1999 period. Bulgarian data is for 2003 and is based on NSI data.

¹⁸⁵ Source: Mol, NPS.

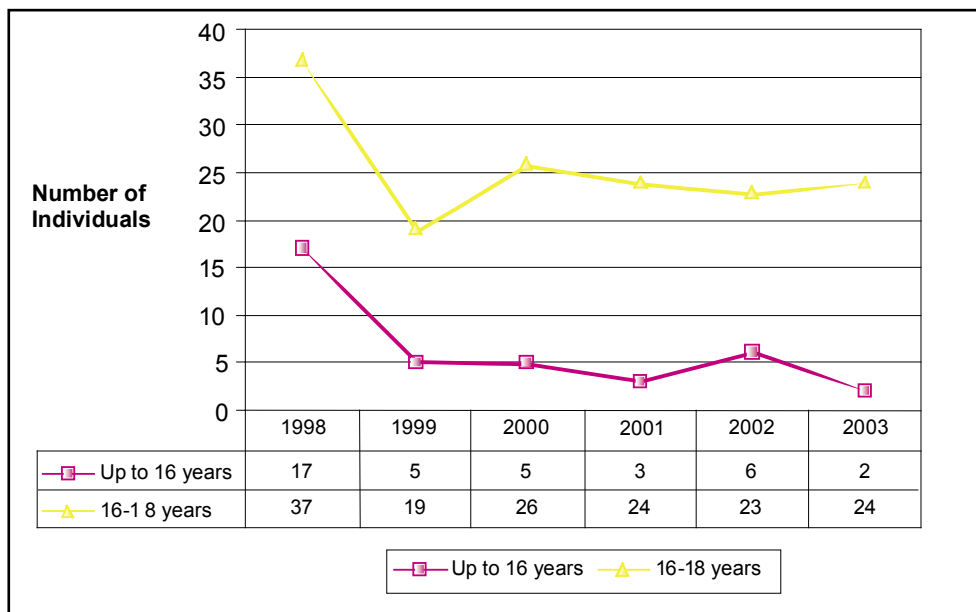


Figure 14: Number of under-18's reported as having committed gun crimes.¹⁸⁶

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Number of incidents	19	28	18	9	6	7	6	4

Table 25: Homicides and attempted homicides committed by under-18's.¹⁸⁷

2.2.2.2 Gender and firearm homicide

According to NSI data, since 2001, the share of female gun crime victims has doubled from 8 percent to 16 percent, to the point where it exceeds the global average of ten percent (see Figure 15 below). Media reports indicate that domestic violence accounts for a significant portion of these crimes, particularly murders.

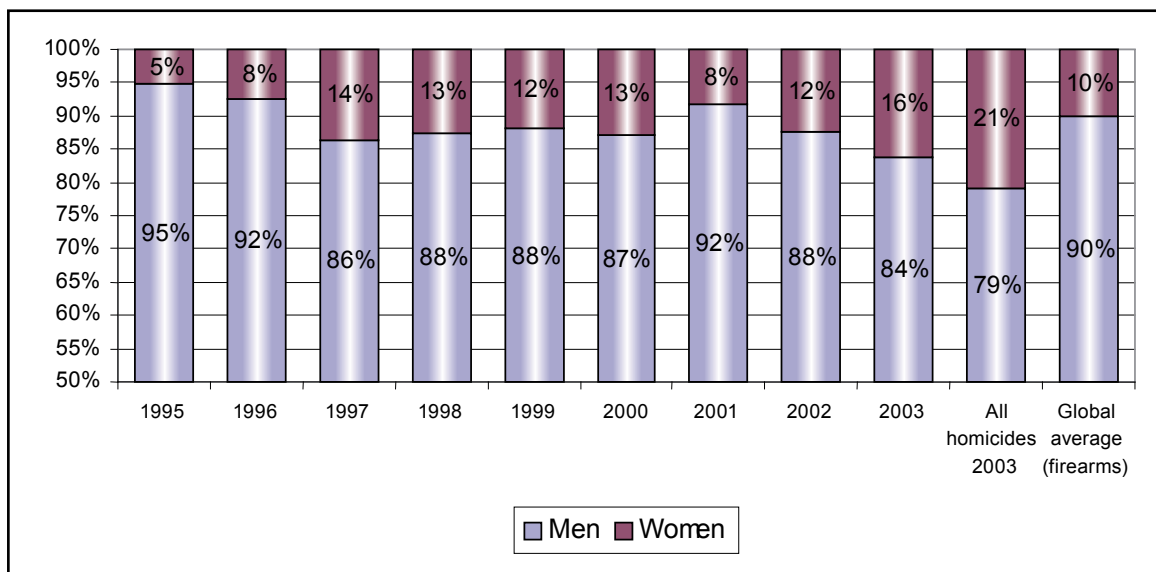


Figure 15: Firearm homicide victims by sex (1995–2003).¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁶ Source: Mol, NPS.

¹⁸⁷ Source: Mol, NPS.

¹⁸⁸ Source: NSI/SAS, 2004.



The table below indicates that the majority of the firearm homicide victims, particularly the men, tend to be above 30 years of age.

AGE	FEMALE	MALE
Up to 30	33%	27%
30–50	42%	52%
over 50	25%	21%

Table 26: Victim age profile (2003).¹⁸⁹

2.3 Impact on development

Although this research shows that SALW are having negative effects in Bulgaria, primarily in connection with crime, negative economic impacts are not readily apparent. Imprecise medical data did not allow the costs of firearms injuries occurring in the country to be estimated with any precision. However, since the number of all firearms casualties remains comparatively small, it is reasonable to conclude that public health costs resulting from firearms misuse are not a significant impediment to economic development in contemporary Bulgaria. In fact, when compared with other public health threats such as road traffic accidents, the costs imposed on the country by firearm casualties look small in comparison. While there are, on average, 16 accidental firearm deaths in Bulgaria a year, transport accidents accounted for an average of 1,055 deaths over this period.¹⁹⁰

It is more difficult to judge the effect of widespread feelings of insecurity among the population on social and economic development. The lack of confidence that HHS and FGD respondents typically showed in government, institutions and society generally do suggest a hypothesis, namely that by undermining confidence in institutions, insecurity and corruption are hampering economic growth. Nevertheless, it is fairly clear from the HHS that in most cases SALW proliferation does not lie at the root of public perceptions of insecurity (see Section 3.1). Moreover, the general public's feelings of insecurity are not shared by international business. According to a leading international risk assessment organisation, the Control Risk Group, weapons proliferation and gun crime are not perceived as particularly big issues and therefore do not impact on Bulgaria's global security and investment risk ratings.¹⁹¹

2.3.1 Developmental impact of SALW smuggling

Although SALW proliferation in Bulgaria may not have significant effects on public health, or pose an immediate threat to community security, there are likely to be developmental costs associated with the illicit production, use and smuggling of SALW in and through Bulgaria. Smuggling in particular has discernible effects. So far as can be determined, the main impact of the SALW successfully smuggled out of Bulgaria has been to increase the firepower of organised crime structures in Western Europe. SALW being smuggled out of Bulgaria are known to have found their way to countries as far afield as the UK and Spain. For example, in November 2003, Spanish police, supported with information supplied by their Bulgarian counterparts, arrested six Bulgarian nationals in Gandia, Spain. They were found to possess 50 spray-gas pistols (apparently from Bulgaria), that had been remodelled into working hand-guns. In addition, there were seven Kalashnikov assault rifles.¹⁹² In their submission to the United Kingdom All Party Parliamentary Group on gun crime, the UK Association of Chief Police Officers quoted Bulgaria as the source of illicit altered Baikal spray guns, which are being recovered in increasing numbers from criminals across the UK.¹⁹³ In another recent seizure, Italian border police at the sea-port in Venice found 40 automatic

¹⁸⁹ Source: NSI.

¹⁹⁰ Average calculated for 1995 – 2003 based on NSI data.

¹⁹¹ Interview, Stratton, 21 October 2004.

¹⁹² MoI press release, 14 January, 2004.

¹⁹³ All Party Parliamentary Group on Gun Crime, November 2003, p 22.

hand guns, 40 silencers, several thousand rounds of ammunition, laser-optical sights, and detonators, hidden in special compartment in a car coming from Bulgaria.¹⁹⁴

In countries such as Spain and the UK, which serve as the end-point for Bulgarian SALW traffickers, there will certainly be negative effects on levels of crime and perhaps even terrorism. However, there is also reason to presume that countries along the trafficking routes suffer detrimental effects connected with the gangs operating in their territory, Bulgaria included.



Figure 16: Known smuggling routes for SALW illegally trafficked from Bulgaria.¹⁹⁵

In addition to hampering legitimate business, SALW smuggling networks, as a form of organised crime, hinder social development in other ways, particularly by undermining the workings of state institutions and imposing higher security costs (see Box 8).

¹⁹⁴ *New Television*, 08 November 2004. One explanation offered by the Bulgarian police is that the firearms were destined for Bulgarian criminal groups based in Italy – see *Sega*, 09 November 2004.

¹⁹⁵ Source: CSD/Saferworld analysis.



Box 8: Organised crime and gun violence

The expansion of the European Union to 25 members has increased the opportunities for organised criminal groups and increased the territories from which they can operate. Romania and Bulgaria are due to join the EU in 2007, but already organised criminal groups are involved in a wide range of activities that impact upon EU countries. Bulgarian organised crime groups are notorious for their skills in currency counterfeiting, forging credit cards and different types of documentation, including identity and travel documentation. They are also particularly active in vehicle crime across the EU and the trafficking of human beings for sexual exploitation. While the illicit trafficking of firearms is not widespread nor the main activity of any one organised crime group, Europol anticipates that the practice is likely to increase as organised crime groups resort to more violent means. Eastern Europe's status as a major source of trafficked weapons is also likely to exacerbate the problem.

In recent years criminal activity in Bulgaria, especially in Sofia, has noticeably intensified. 'Underground-combat' has erupted on several occasions with dozens of incidents of murder and attempted murder. Although efforts have been made to counter the rise in mafia-related gun violence, authorities complain of the difficulties in successfully prosecuting assailants. Often, witnesses are intimidated against testifying, lawyers refuse to take on cases and evidence disappears at the hands of corrupt police officials. Although legislation is in place, it is not enforced and corruption and a lack of capabilities limit the effectiveness of police to deal with powerful organised crime groups. Practically no major criminals have been successfully prosecuted in recent years, mainly because of corruption and a malfunctioning judiciary.¹⁹⁶ The authorities' impotence was illustrated in October 2003 when Interior Chief Secretary Gen. Boyko Borissov, recommended to Sofia citizens that they leave restaurants immediately if heavily guarded businessmen enter the establishments. Clashes between organised crime groups have resulted in more than fifty mob hits in the past three years, including the following high-profile incidents:

- In December 2003, Bulgarian media reported the authorities' concern that the shooting of an alleged contraband lord Konstantin Dimitrov would provoke a 'war' between rival groups.
- In December 2003, two assassins dressed as monks shot drug dealer Dimitar Christov and two of his bodyguards to death in Sofia.¹⁹⁷
- Underworld boss Milcho Bonev and five of his bodyguards were shot dead in July 2004 by assassins dressed in police uniforms.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁶ Europol, pp 17-18, 2.

¹⁹⁷ *Dnevnik*, 23 December 2004.

¹⁹⁸ *Novinite*, 10 October 2003; *Novinite*, 7 November 2004; *SF Chronicle*, 12 September 2004; and *Novinite*, 22 December 2003.