

Did Australia's gun laws *really* save 200 lives a year?

Background

- The number of firearm-related deaths was declining prior to Australia's 1996 gun laws. The decline continued after the legislative changes.
- Populist media and politicians have claimed that Australia's gun laws "saved about 200 lives annually". This claim has not been properly examined.

Numbers of deaths

- Table 1 shows actual numbers of firearm-related deaths in Australia, over a 30 year period¹, as well as the difference in numbers of deaths from one year to another.
- Taking into account the pre-existing downward trend in deaths, there is no evidence that 200 lives have been saved each year due to Australia's gun laws.

Table 1: Number of firearm-related deaths

Year	Suicide	<i>Difference</i>	Homicide	<i>Difference</i>	Accidental	<i>Difference</i>	Total	<i>Difference</i>
1979	523		102		65		690	
1980	514	-9	103	1	62	-3	679	-11
1981	492	-22	90	-13	36	-26	618	-61
1982	547	55	106	16	49	13	702	84
1983	508	-39	92	-14	40	-9	640	-62
1984	530	22	125	33	33	-7	688	48
1985	553	23	95	-30	35	2	683	-5
1986	545	-8	96	1	27	-8	668	-15
1987	569	24	98	2	28	1	695	27
1988	529	-40	116	18	30	2	675	-20
1989	454	-75	84	-32	18	-12	556	-119
1990	478	24	85	1	31	13	594	38
1991	501	23	86	1	29	-2	616	22
1992	490	-11	105	19	24	-5	619	3
1993	424	-66	59	-46	18	-6	501	-118
1994	429	5	49	-10	20	2	498	-3
1995	398	-31	58	9	14	-6	470	-28
1996	385	-13	99	41	29	15	513	43
1997	333	-52	75	-24	19	-10	427	-86
1998	225	-108	54	-21	21	2	300	-127
1999	265	40	62	8	28	7	355	55
2000	230	-35	60	-2	44	16	334	-21
2001	261	31	47	-13	18	-26	326	-8
2002	217	-44	45	-2	30	12	292	-34
2003	193	-24	54	9	40	10	287	-5
2004	167	-26	32	-22	52	12	251	-36
2005	147	-20	26	-6	50	-2	223	-28
2006	181	34	41	15	24	-26	246	23
2007	190	9	28	-13	19	-5	237	-9
2008	183	-7	27	-1	24	5	234	-3
2009*	169	-14	36	9	22	-2	227	-7
2010*	162	-7	30	-6	44	22	236	9

* Note: numbers are likely to rise following ABS revisions to data.

References

1. Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). Causes of Death publication series.