



# OFAH INSIGHTS

## **A SURVEY ON** FIREARMS LEGISLATION IN CANADA

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## INTRODUCTION

The federal government proposed new firearms legislation through the introduction of Bill C-71 on March 20, 2018. The OFAH has been working hard to ensure government continues to hear (and understand) the numerous questions and concerns firearms owners have with this bill. To inform our advocacy, the OFAH polled the firearms community to better understand their perspectives.

The survey questions were intended to determine firearms community demographics, interests in firearms, general opinions on the bill, and specific reactions to each of the main proposals.

The survey was posted for seven days, April 10-16, 2018, and was shared through the OFAH website and social media platforms, along with OFAH e-news subscribers.



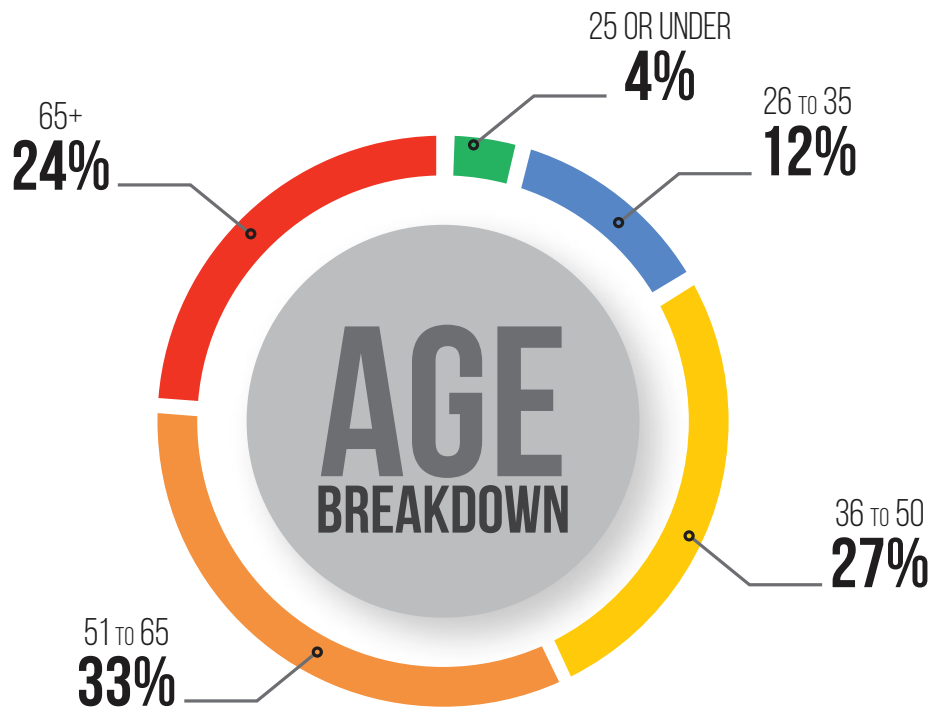


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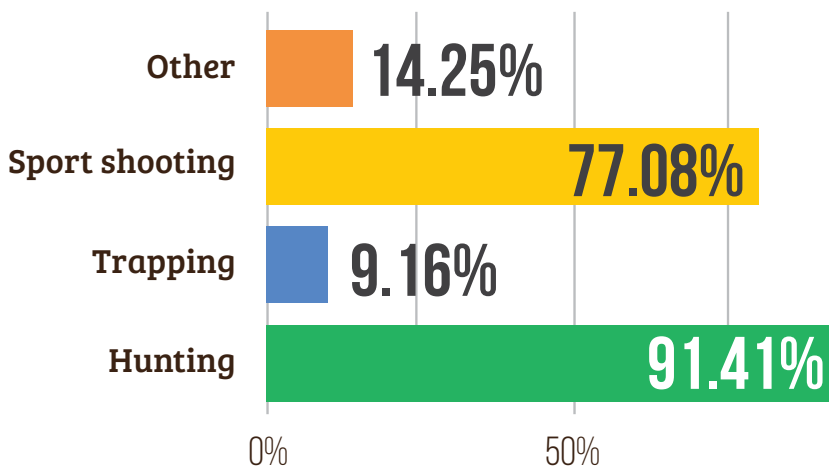
## SURVEY RESPONDENTS

The survey received **3,524** responses and included over **4,192** additional comments.

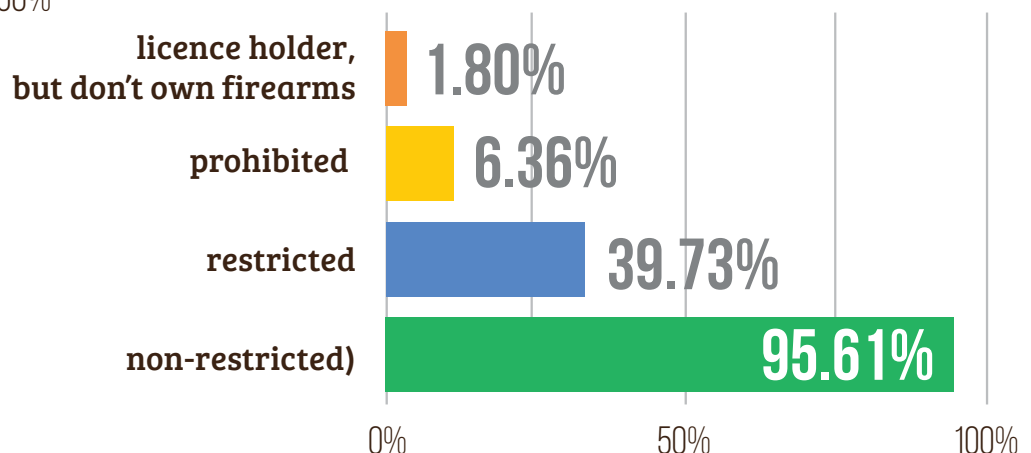
Survey respondents represented all age groups, as well as all classes of firearms ownership (prohibited, restricted, non-restricted), and interests in firearms uses (e.g. sport shooting, trapping, hunting).



## FIREARMS-RELATED ACTIVITIES



## WHAT CLASSIFICATION OF FIREARMS





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## **PUBLIC SAFETY**

Ninety-seven percent of respondents felt that Bill C-71 is focused too much on law-abiding citizens to provide any net gains for public safety. For those individuals who own restricted or prohibited firearms, this percentage increased to 99%.

It is abundantly clear that despite the government's steadfast assurance that Bill C-71 will ultimately increase public safety, the firearms community sees this bill as restrictions against the law-abiding community that won't reduce criminal activity.

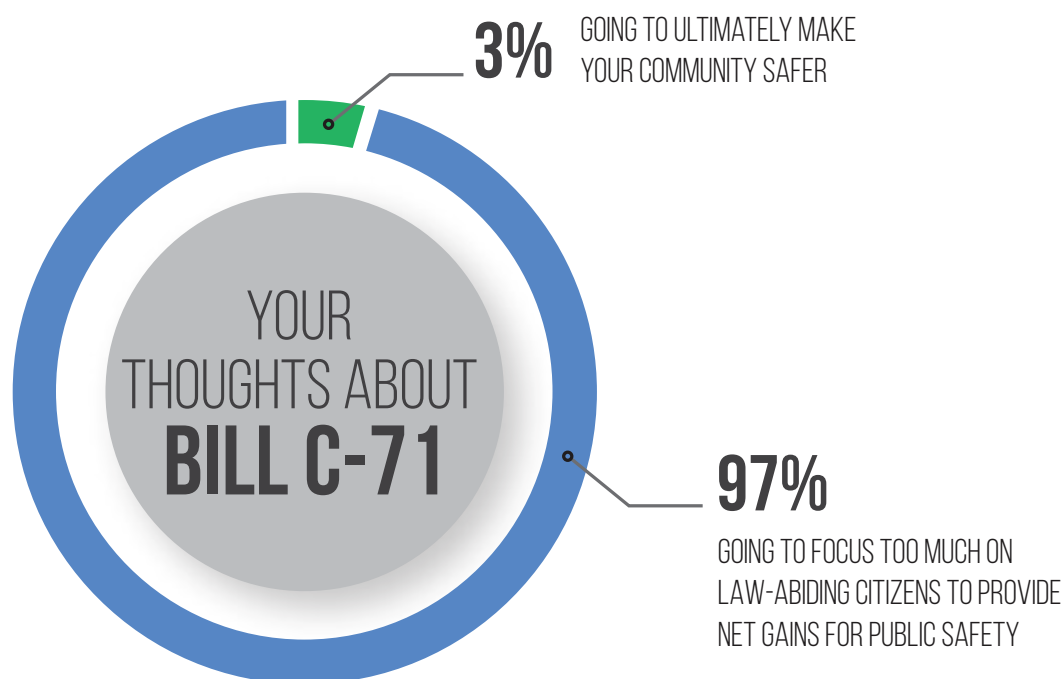
**One respondent said: "If gun violence related to gangs is the main concern for the government why am I not seeing anything that will stop a gang member from obtaining a firearm!"**

The firearms community is not opposed to legislation that increases public safety, but they do not support legislation that will target them without addressing the stated intent of addressing gangs and violent crime.

Respondents also addressed concerns about Bill C-75 contradicting the stated intent of Bill C-71.

**One respondent said: "Bill C-75 reduces penalties on the very problems Bill C-71 is trying to curtail."**

**Question:** As a firearms owner, do you feel that Bill C-71 is...







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## **BACKGROUND CHECKS**

Bill C-71 is proposing that background checks be expanded to include the life history of an applicant, rather than the previous five years, as is the case currently.

Of all the overall concerns raised by the bill, survey respondents scored background checks as their least concerning element with 45% of respondents saying they weren't concerned with the proposed change.

**One respondent said: "I have little to no issue with background checks, although those of us with existing security clearances should not have to undergo the background check another time just for a license."**

On the flip side of that, 32% percent of people stated they were moderately concerned with this element of the proposal, while just over 20% said they were very concerned. Of those concerned, the main reason was related to mistakes that applicants may have made in the past and how it might affect them going forward.

**One respondent said: "...the lifetime background check is a bit strong as some folks have had made mistakes in the past and have changed their life for the better."**

**Another said: "I am concerned for the life time background checks. I have made mistakes many years ago but this does not reflect who I am today."**





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## LICENCE VALIDATION

More than 32% of respondents are very concerned with the licence validation proposals, while 41% are moderately concerned and almost 25% are not concerned at all.

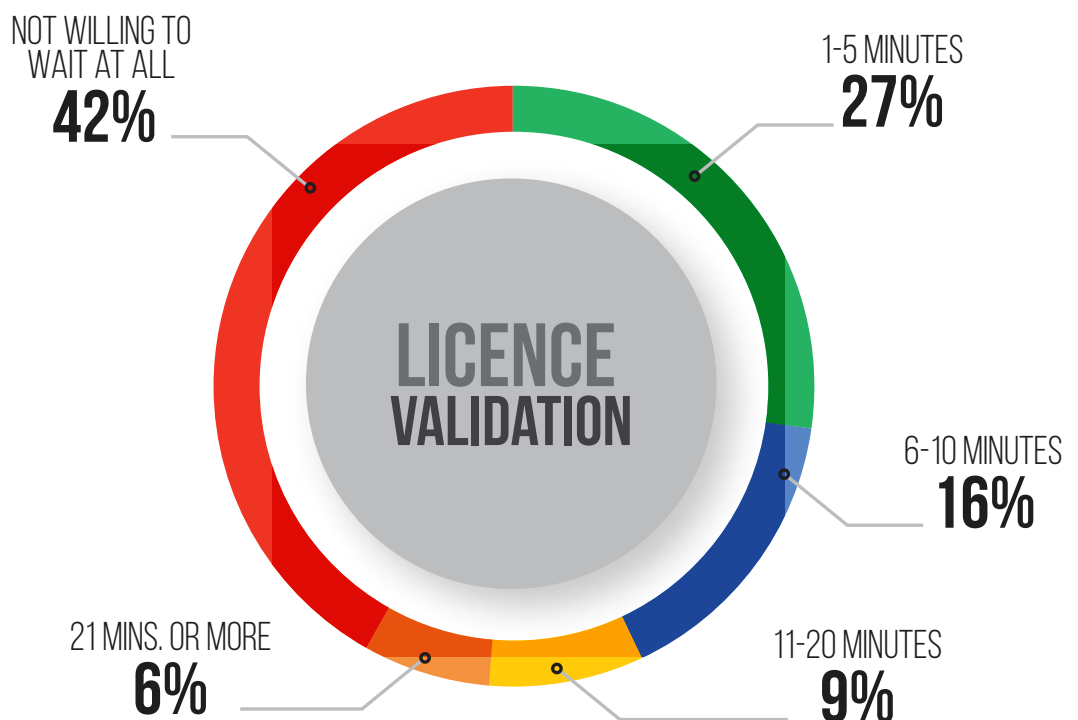
It appears that many firearms owners acknowledge the intent of government with licence validation before the sale of a non-restricted firearm, but it is clear that the process must be quick, easy and readily available to ensure that licensed firearms owners are not unnecessarily restricted in selling a firearm.

**One respondent offered up the following comment related to their biggest concern with the proposed validation process: "The need for a quick method of validating PALs -- which should be able to be done online in SECONDS -- this is 2018 and access to information is easy."**

Forty-two percent of respondents weren't willing to wait at all for validation. Of those who indicated they would be willing to wait, an overwhelming majority of them wanted it to be done in less than 10 minutes. Additionally, many respondents were concerned with government keeping a reference number, or any record of the sale and still question how this new step will ultimately increase public safety.

**One respondent said: "Validating a PAL doesn't require a reference number, phone in, tell me it's valid, then I know it's legal to sell the firearm."**

**Question:** *Bill C-71 proposes new requirements for licences to be validated for both private and retail firearms sales. Currently private sellers are required to check a buyer's licence (not validate), and many businesses do this as a 'best practice' now. As a licensed firearms owner, how long would you be willing to wait to receive a licence validation for the sale of a non-restricted firearm?*





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## AUTHORIZATION TO TRANSPORT (ATT) CERTIFICATE

For those respondents who own restricted and/or prohibited firearms, more than 75% are very concerned with the proposed changes to automatic ATTs, while another 22% were moderately concerned.

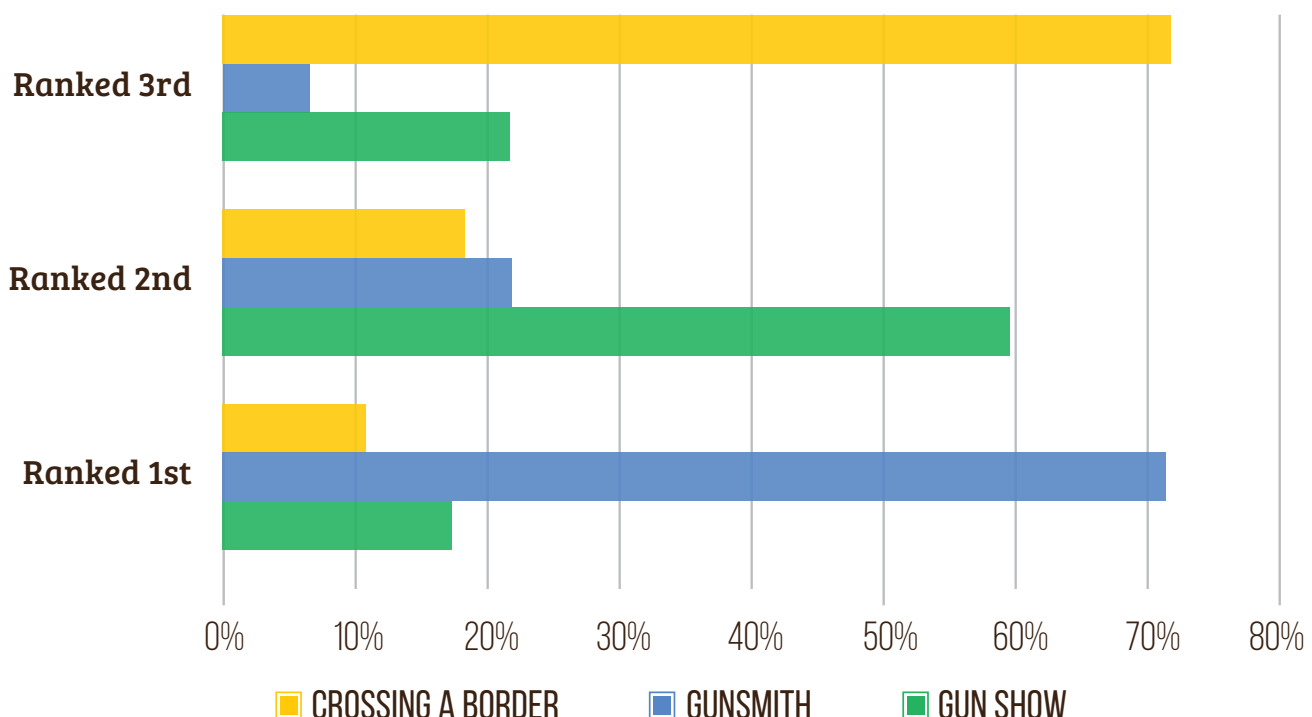
Firearms owners do not believe the removal of the automatic ATTs for **ANY** destination increases public safety, and is simply being viewed as more “red tape”.

One respondent said: “I would like to know how many crimes by legal gun owners on their way to a gun show, border or gunsmith from 2013-2017 were committed to justify the change (in) ATT requirements.”

All destinations are important to restricted and prohibited firearms owners, but when asked to rank in priority sequence, respondents indicated their preference for automatic ATTs was to a gunsmith. Almost 72% of people said it was their top priority, while 22% ranked it second.

Gun show was a top priority destination for 17% of restricted and prohibited firearms owners, whereas crossing a border was most important for 11% and least important for 71%.

**Question:** Bill C-71 will reduce the automatic ATT allowances for several common destinations for a licensed rPAL firearms owner, including to a gunsmith, to a gun show and to cross a border. To and from a CFO approved range (within the province) and transporting a firearm home from a point of purchase (i.e. retailer, gun show) will remain as an automatic ATT. What do you feel is most important to be included in the automatic ATT? Please rank below.







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## CLASSIFICATION

More than 62% of respondents were very concerned with the proposed change to have the RCMP be responsible for firearms classification, with another 24% moderately concerned. For restricted and prohibited firearms owners, the proportion who are very concerned jumps to 80%, with another 14% who are moderately concerned.

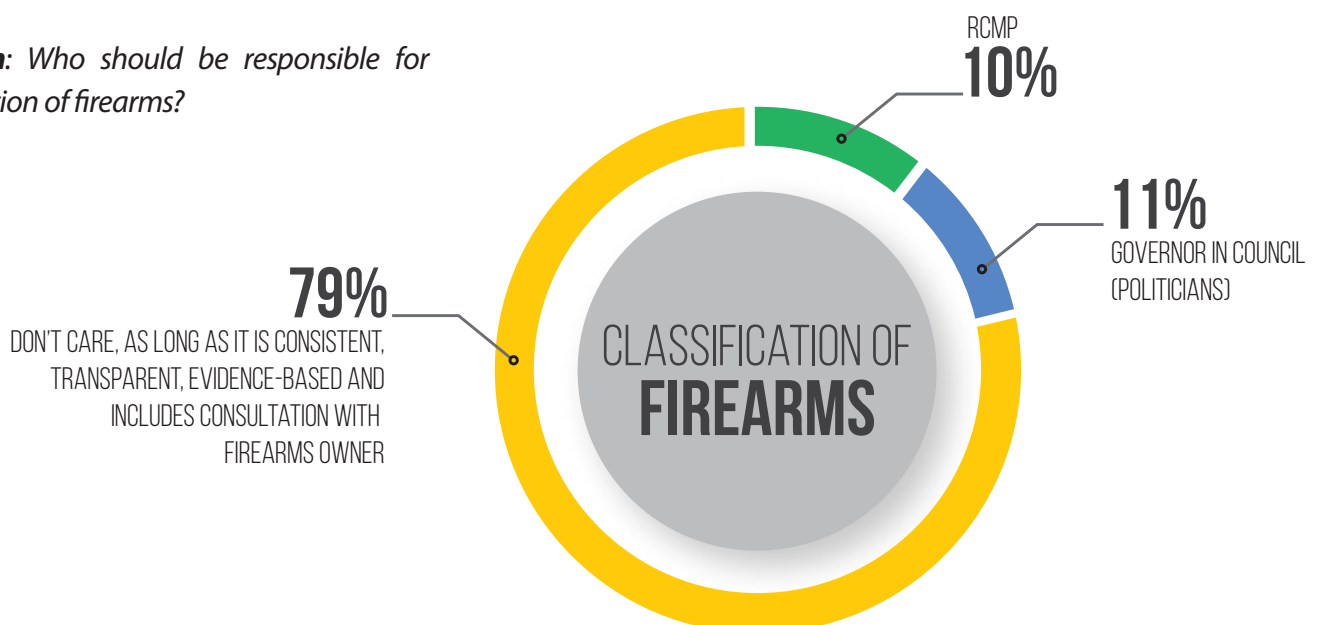
Additionally, survey respondents have expressed concerns with firearms classification decisions being made by both the RCMP and politicians. Of these respondents who own restricted and prohibited firearms, only five percent felt the RCMP should be responsible compared to 10% of all respondents.

**One respondent said: "I am very concerned that through this legislation, the RCMP will abuse the power and change status classification without use of common sense."**

With that in mind, the firearms community appears to be more interested in how firearms are classified, as opposed to who does it. Seventy-nine percent of respondents believe that if there is a process created to ensure that classifications and/or re-classifications of firearms are properly, consistently and transparently reviewed, then the 'who' will be less important.

**One respondent said: "... whether it is the RCMP or politicians, we need a way to challenge inappropriately classified arms. There should be a (government) committee of knowledgeable members from various gun sport organizations."**

**Question:** Who should be responsible for classification of firearms?







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## **REGISTRY**

Despite the government's continued insistence that Bill C-71 is not a registry, the vast majority (87%) of firearms owners disagree. This increases to almost 92% when only looking at those who own restricted and prohibited firearms.

Many respondents felt that some elements of the proposed legislation either were a registry, or could form a registry in the future.

**One respondent said: "I feel this is a prelude to a new Liberal Gun Register."**

**Another said: "... a back door approach to some form of gun registry."**

The **Long Gun Registry** records being made available to Quebec was the most concerning element to survey respondents overall, with more than 75% saying they were very concerned and 88% saying they were at least moderately concerned. In general, most respondents were confused with how the records were even available to be transferred to Quebec if they were supposedly destroyed by the RCMP in the past.

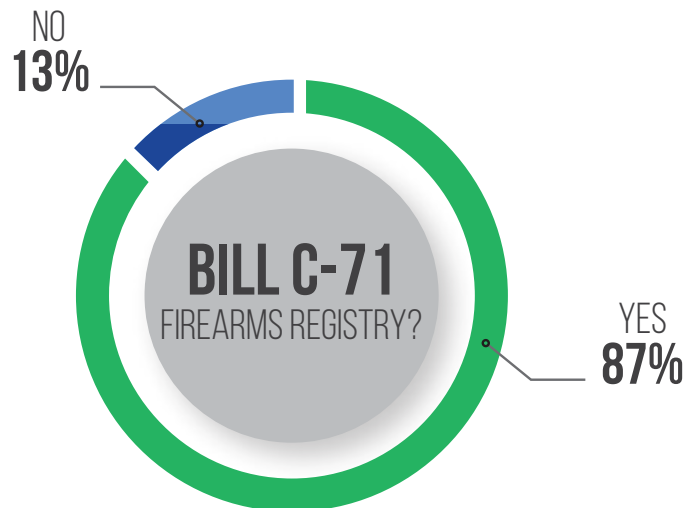
**One respondent said: "I am still somewhat confused on this.....all of the Registry records were supposed to be destroyed."**

**Another asked: "If records of the Registry were destroyed, how does Quebec get them?"**

**Retailer record keeping** was also concerning to many survey respondents, with over 46% saying they were very concerned and 75% saying they were at least moderately concerned. Most concerns were related to this developing into some form of registry, the privacy and security of information, as well as burden on retailers.

**One respondent said: "As things are we already have to show and have our records taken every time we purchase firearms or ammo. I would rather see a system in check to protect our identity."**

**Another stated: "Stores are not secure enough with firearm and ammunition records."**



***Question: As a firearms owner, do you consider elements of C-71 to be some form of a firearms registry?***



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## OVERALL

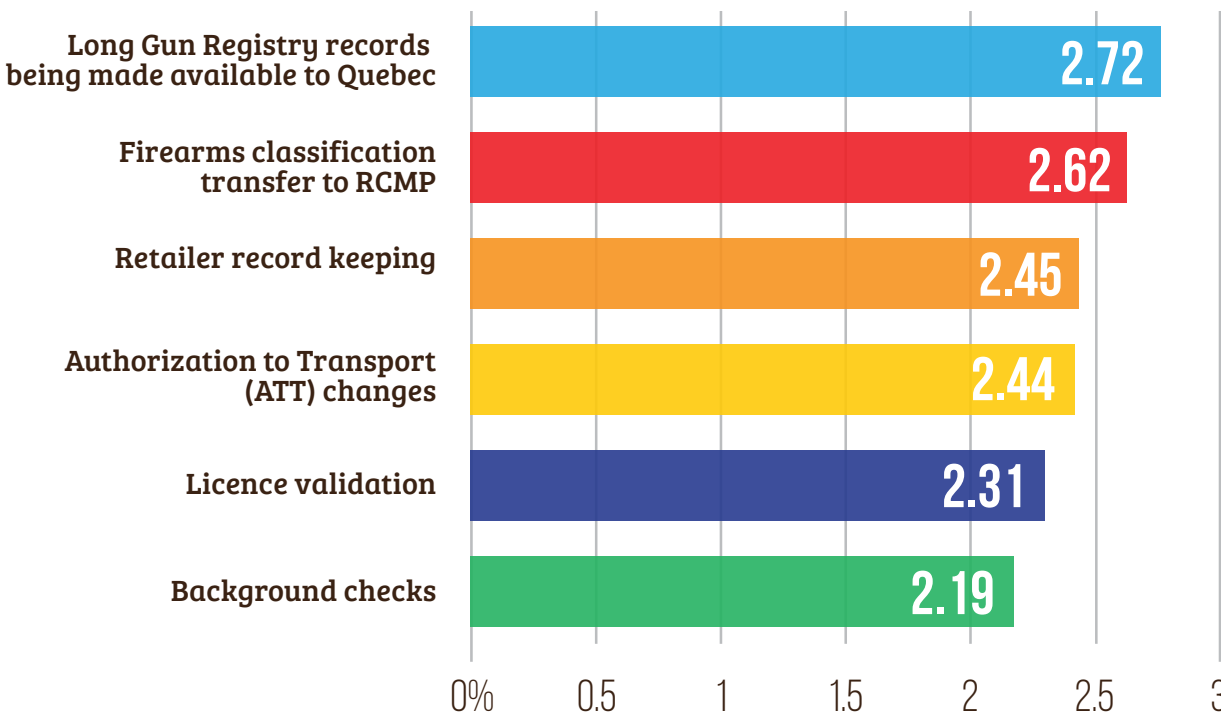
The opposition to Bill C-71 expressed in the survey results and comments, show that government has not yet been able to effectively demonstrate how this bill will increase public safety in any meaningful way.

**One respondent said: “Mostly (if not all) of the proposed changes in Bill C-71 are not only a nuisance to gun owners, but are also very ineffective to reduce crime/gun violence in Canada, which is frustrating as licenced gun owners also care about public safety.”**

The level of concern from prohibited and restricted firearms owners seems to be elevated for all proposed changes. In particular, the classification and ATT proposals showed the largest increase in scores.

**Classification:** 2.79 (up from 2.62); **ATTs:** 2.75 (up from 2.44)

**Question:** Bill C-71 proposes many changes to firearms legislation as outlined in our background analysis, which can be found at [www.ofah.org/firearms/billc71/](http://www.ofah.org/firearms/billc71/). What part of Bill C-71 are you most concerned with? Please rank by priority.



**Note:** The scores shown in the above graphic represent a weighted average of responses provided by all respondents.





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## **CONCLUSION**

The results of this survey make it clear that many in the firearms community do not support Bill C-71.

The government says the legislative proposal emphasizes public safety and effective police work, while respecting law-abiding firearms owners, but these survey results show that many in the firearms community disagree.

There is a strong belief that this bill does little to enhance public safety, and only further restricts licensed firearms users.

In particular, those owning restricted and prohibited firearms feel the most targeted by this proposed legislation and are very concerned about the bill.

The OFAH issued this survey in hopes of gaining an accurate understanding of how the hunting, trapping and shooting community feels about this proposed legislation, and feel as though the response we received has helped us achieve that goal.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who participated in this survey. Your input is not only appreciated, but extremely useful as it will greatly assist us as we educate the public and decision-makers about firearms, their use and the millions of responsible, law-abiding firearms owners in Ontario and across Canada who want to be respected.