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**Third United Nations Conference to Review
Progress Made in the Implementation of the
Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and
Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light
Weapons in All Its Aspects**

New York, 18–29 June 2018

Working paper submitted by Jamaica

**Effects of gun crime on Jamaica: the case for the comprehensive
review of the Programme of Action and the International
Tracing Instrument**

General overview

1. As a category, violent crime in Jamaica has assumed a major role in the overall crime rate over the past three decades. For example, in 1974, the violent crime rate accounted for just 10 per cent of the total crime rate. Two decades later, in 1996, with the total reported crime rate remaining relatively stable, violent crime had quadrupled to 43 per cent of total crimes.¹ The situation is consistent with observations made by Berkman (2007),² who ascribes regional rates of homicide in Latin America and the Caribbean to levels typically seen in areas ravaged by war.
2. As violence has increased, so too has the use of firearms. Increasingly, more powerful weapons are being used, resulting in higher mortality levels. Police statistics show that guns were used to commit 90 per cent of the murders recorded since the start of 2018.³ The gun was also the main weapon used to commit murders for the corresponding period in 2017.
3. In a report prepared by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in 2007,⁴ it was noted that crime reduced tourist arrivals, discouraged business investment and stifled economic growth. The report suggested that “Jamaica could boost economic growth per capita by 5.4 per cent per year”. This was further underscored in the

¹ Herbert Gayle, “Adolescent male survivability in Jamaica”, paper prepared for the Jamaica Adolescent Reproductive Health Activity Project (Youth.now), Kingston, December 2002, p. 65.

² Heather Berkman, “Social exclusion and violence in Latin America and the Caribbean”, Inter-American Development Bank working paper No. 515 (2007).

³ Jamaica Constabulary Force, “Periodic Serious and Violent Crimes Review”, 2018.

⁴ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and World Bank, “Crime, violence, and development: trends, costs, and policy options in the Caribbean”, Washington, D.C., March 2007.



National Security Policy for Jamaica, 2013, which indicated that “the direct cost of crime and corruption to Jamaica includes lost life expectancy as well as the cost of injuries and health care, but the total economic loss also includes the indirect cost of crime, which includes the higher cost of doing business in a low-trust society”. The cost to Jamaica of violence-related injuries was also confirmed by Glaister Leslie,⁵ who pointed to an evaluation funded by the World Health Organization in 2006 which indicated that the cost of direct medical care for violence-related injuries at public hospitals island wide was \$29 million, approximately 12 per cent of the total health budget of Jamaica. Further, productivity losses due to violence-related injuries were estimated to account for approximately \$398 million, equivalent to 4 per cent of the gross domestic product of Jamaica.⁶ The costs related to reduced mobility, weaker investor confidence, higher police costs, emigration of the educated middle class, reduced access to social services and an overall climate of fear cannot be overstated.

4. It is believed that there are approximately 274 active gangs operating in Jamaica. Gangs are believed to be responsible for as much as 80 per cent of all major crimes in Jamaica. Many of the gangs are transnational in scope, with operations not only in the rest of the Caribbean, but also in the United States of America, Canada and Europe. In a 2013 paper, Enrique Arias noted that these transnational networks supported “small-scale smuggling operations with Jamaicans sending drugs to the U.S., Canada and the U.K., and importing arms mostly from the U.S. and Haiti”. Against this background, Glaister Leslie also posits that a differentiated response is needed for addressing the proliferation of small arms in the country. This is especially important as it should be noted that most of the small arms used in crimes are believed to have entered illegally, but much of the ammunition appears to have entered the country legally before being transferred to the illicit market.

5. The interest of Jamaica in addressing the illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons, therefore, is spurred by its realities as a society that continues to suffer the social and economic dislocation linked to this illicit trade.

Gun crime in Jamaica

6. Anthony Harriott notes that firearms, particularly handguns, are the weapons of choice for major crimes in Jamaica, and the proportion of crimes committed with them is rising. In 1990, 50 per cent of all reported murders and 57 per cent of all robberies involved firearm use; in 2000, those proportions had increased to 61 per cent and 68 per cent, respectively.⁷ The periodic crime statistics review of the Jamaica Constabulary Force reports that in 2009, gun murders represented 77 per cent of murders, while in 2016 approximately 81 per cent of all homicides committed in Jamaica involved the use of a firearm. Table 1 shows the steady progression in this regard since 2011. Additionally, and as shown in tables 2 and 3, the perpetrators and victims of violent crimes tend to be young men.

⁵ Glaister Leslie, *Confronting the Don: The Political Economy of Gang Violence in Jamaica* (Geneva, Small Arms Survey, 2010).

⁶ Alexander Butchart and others, *Manual for estimating the economic costs of injuries due to interpersonal and self-directed violence* (World Health Organization, Geneva, 2008); and Jamaica, Ministry of Health, and Violence Prevention Alliance, “Estimation of the cost of interpersonal violence: Jamaica status report”, Kingston, 2007.

⁷ Anthony Harriott, “Crime trends in the Caribbean and responses”, report submitted to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 12 November 2002.

Table 1
Murders committed using a gun during the period 2011–2017

Year	Total number of murders	Murders committed using a gun	Percentage of murders committed using a gun
2017	1 644	1 339	81.4
2016	1 354	1 099	81.2
2015	1 208	974	80.6
2014	1 005	717	71.3
2013	1 201	883	73.5
2012	1 099	774	70.4
2011	1 133	972	80.5

Source: Statistics provided by the Jamaica Constabulary Force in 2017.

Table 2
Victims of shootings disaggregated by age group and sex for the period from 1 January 2013 to 31 December 2017

Age group	Number of shootings														
	2013			2014			2015			2016			2017		
	F	M	Total	F	M	Total	F	M	Total	F	M	Total	F	M	Total
0–4	3	2	5	0	0	0	1	5	6	1	6	7	8	5	13
5–9	4	4	8	4	4	8	1	4	5	6	5	11	4	11	15
10–14	8	6	14	3	3	6	5	11	16	15	18	33	14	20	34
15–19	27	105	132	24	93	117	16	115	131	28	134	162	42	125	167
20–24	46	190	236	21	210	231	33	212	245	33	246	279	47	288	335
25–29	27	167	194	30	173	203	25	199	224	26	213	239	31	250	281
30–34	20	145	165	22	140	162	27	142	169	30	167	197	34	176	210
35–39	19	107	126	18	96	114	13	114	127	20	120	140	36	175	211
40–44	17	83	100	18	88	106	15	85	100	15	93	108	24	104	128
45–49	16	70	86	12	79	91	14	79	93	17	63	80	25	102	127
50–54	13	46	59	8	44	52	12	40	52	10	63	73	23	67	90
55–59	6	37	43	6	23	29	4	36	40	10	32	42	10	53	63
60 and over	6	38	44	9	35	44	11	30	41	8	40	48	9	40	49
Unknown age	19	750	769	21	448	469	9	402	411	16	509	525	22	692	714
Total	231	1 750	1 981	196	1 436	1 632	186	1 474	1 660	235	1 709	1 944	329	2 108	2 437

Source: Statistics provided by the Jamaica Constabulary Force in 2017.

Abbreviations: F, female; M, male.

Table 3
Victims of murder disaggregated by age group and sex for the period from 1 January 2013 to 31 December 2017

Age group	Number of murders														
	2013			2014			2015			2016			2017		
	F	M	Total	F	M	Total	F	M	Total	F	M	Total	F	M	Total
0–4	5	4	9	1	2	3	2	1	3	5	3	8	0	2	2
5–9	1	0	1	2	1	3	2	1	3	0	1	1	1	2	3
10–14	4	3	7	3	8	11	4	8	12	0	6	6	5	5	10
15–19	12	67	79	5	70	75	14	87	101	9	68	77	21	70	91
20–24	22	144	166	14	128	142	18	200	218	14	198	212	19	215	234
25–29	11	171	182	13	131	144	14	174	188	18	220	238	18	237	255
30–34	13	141	154	15	134	149	6	156	162	14	184	198	16	220	236
35–39	8	108	116	9	88	97	12	110	122	13	140	153	16	153	169
40–44	17	104	121	8	85	93	9	99	108	14	100	114	15	151	166
45–49	7	97	104	6	64	70	8	74	82	10	75	85	10	96	106
50–54	7	62	69	8	53	61	7	52	59	13	53	66	13	70	83
55–59	5	43	48	3	34	37	7	37	44	9	38	47	11	46	57
60 and over	14	51	65	10	55	65	10	51	61	12	63	75	7	90	97
Unknown age	4	76	80	3	52	55	3	42	45	4	70	74	5	102	107
Total	130	1 071	1 201	100	905	1 005	116	1 092	1 208	135	1 219	1 354	157	1 459	1 616

Source: Statistics provided by the Jamaica Constabulary Force in 2017.

Abbreviations: F, female; M, male.

Conclusion and recommendations

7. In an effort to respond to the challenges associated with crime and violence, the Government has undertaken a range of collaborative programmes and projects aimed at achieving a safe, secure and just society. To this end, measures have been taken to strengthen the legislative and policy frameworks to, inter alia, update and strengthen the Government's response to addressing criminal activities and sexual violence against women and girls, as well as improving the accountability of the police. The national development plan of Jamaica (Vision 2030), which is closely aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals, and the national crime prevention and community safety strategy also provide an important framework for implementing crime prevention and community safety initiatives. In addition, action is being pursued at the bilateral, regional and multilateral levels in recognition of the fact that action at all levels is mutually reinforcing in order for real progress to be realized.

8. It is in keeping with the foregoing that Jamaica continues to attach signal importance to the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons. Jamaica believes that there is significant scope for the Third Review Conference to contribute to this endeavour. Countries like Jamaica that are not in conflict or post-conflict situations are especially hopeful that the Conference will give due regard to countries plagued by armed violence, since the

diversion of small arms and light weapons poses a significant threat to the daily existence and survival of ordinary citizens.

9. Recommendations emanating from the Review Conference should specifically recognize the need for international cooperation and coordination. More targeted, enhanced and focused measures that support the full and effective implementation of the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument are needed, with priority attention being given to creating and sustaining a framework that facilitates implementation at multiple levels. For developing countries like ours, such cooperation takes on particular significance given the porosity of our borders and our capacity constraints, but also, more importantly, the fact that we are neither manufacturers nor suppliers of small arms and light weapons.

10. International cooperation and assistance will also be critical to achieve, inter alia, consensus on emergent firearm technology to explore the wider cadre of firearm weapon systems, particularly those manufactured by means of additive technology and those that are purposefully distributed as modular designs. The exchange of information and best practices, including for the intensification of technical and technological exchange to augment risk assessment and regulation, is imperative.

11. The Review Conference should build on the outcome of the Sixth Biennial Meeting of States with respect to its reference to the inclusion of ammunition as an element of concern. The international community should aim to ensure that there can be sufficient guidelines to allow for the effective marking and tracing of ammunition.

12. Consideration should be given to the standardization of the marking regimes, including secondary markings, as a means of further ensuring that issues of traceability are fully addressed.

13. It is also essential that there be a strong link between the Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular Sustainable Development Goal 16 and target 16.4, which speaks to significantly reducing illicit arms flows.

14. Coordination should also take account of the important gender perspective that must be brought to bear in any effort to address the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Promoting collaboration in the development of intervention programmes that leverage the role of women as mothers in targeting male youths involved in or are at risk of becoming involved in armed violence or organized crime would also be important.