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Abbreviations and acronyms

AAMVS	Arms and Ammunition Management Validation System
AE-SAT	Arms Embargo Self-Assessment Tool
ANMaC	Argentina's National Agency of Controlled Materials
ATT	Arms Trade Treaty
CARICOM IMPACS	Caribbean Community Implementation Agency for Crime and Security
CENSS	Center for Security Studies
CHF	Swiss franc(s)
C-IED	Counter-improvised explosive device
CSP	Conference of States Parties to the ATT
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EU	European Union
FPI	Flemish Peace Institute
GVD	Global Violent Deaths (database)
HSBA	Human Security Baseline Assessment for Sudan and South Sudan
IED	Improvised explosive device
INTERPOL	International Criminal Police Organization
LAS	League of Arab States
MAG	Mines Advisory Group
NAP	National action plan
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PMF	Privately made firearm
PoA	Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects
REGISYNC	Developing Common Minimum Standards for Legal Arms Registers and Improving Information Exchange Among EU Member States, South-east Europe, Ukraine, and Moldova
SAENK	Strengthening Implementation and Enforcement of the Arms Embargo on North Korea
SANA	Security Assessment in North Africa
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SEESAC	South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons
UEMS	Unplanned Explosions at Munitions Sites (database)
UNG	Ukrainian Networking Group
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
WAM	Weapons and ammunition management
WCO	World Customs Organization

I. Director's introduction

The year 2023 was significant for a number of reasons. It saw the conclusion of Daniel de Torres' successful stewardship as director of the Small Arms Survey, and so I would like to start by thanking him for his dedicated service to the Survey over the last four years. This year also marked the final year of the Survey's five-year strategy and the completion of significant projects such as Strengthening Implementation and Enforcement of the Arms Embargo on North Korea (SAENK). It was a year underlined by innovation, with in-depth regional studies on the socio-economic costs of armed violence in the Caribbean, the trafficking of improvised explosive device (IED) components in West Africa, and arms proliferation in Afghanistan, as well as an update to the Global Violent Deaths (GVD) database. More worryingly for the arms control and armed violence reduction agendas, 2023 saw the reversal of progress towards Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16.1. With increases in conflict-related deaths around the world (including in occupied Palestinian territory, Sudan, and Ukraine), ongoing challenges to real-world implementation of legal arms control measures designed to prevent gender-based violence in parts of Latin America, and the ever-increasing threat of privately made firearms (PMFs)—ranging from artisanal weapons to 3D-printed firearms—this past year could be described as a turning point for our agenda.

Growth in privately manufactured firearms

Research in 2023 underlined the growing impact of PMFs in regions such as the Caribbean, Europe, and West Africa, where these weapons increasingly account for significant proportions of seizures. The scale of the problem and the types of PMFs (craft/artisanal firearms, ghost guns, converted firearms, and 3D-printed and computer numerical control (CNC)-fabricated firearms) vary from region to region, but the overall global trend—and a key concern—is the advancing technical capabilities of these

Image 1 Ghost gun components seized by authorities in France



Note: The contents of a kit for the assembly of a partially finished pistol (left) and two partially finished receivers (right) seized by French authorities.

Source: Institut de recherche criminelle de la gendarmerie nationale (IRCGN) of the French National Gendarmerie
Image from *Privately Made Firearms in the European Union*

weapons. This calls into question whether current multilateral frameworks, which were designed in the early 2000s when this was a much more marginal issue, should re-examine in greater detail the issue of non-industrial production of small arms. This is not to say that more traditional sources of illicit small arms are abating: 2023 saw the continued flouting of UN arms embargoes and a resurgence of other state-sponsored transfers of dubious legality, while the Survey documented the use of commercial shipments and a range of concealment methods that contribute to significant levels of ant trafficking of firearms.

SDG targets and a need to focus on demand

The international community risks failing to meet SDG 16.1 targets, as the resurgence in conflict deaths in recent years has negatively affected the already slow progress observed in reducing the rate of violent deaths since 2015. Firearm violence is not only a security issue but also a public health issue. Affected regions are particularly concerned about the broader impacts of firearms trafficking and violence on development; research undertaken in the Caribbean showed that treating a single firearm injury costs between 2 and 11 times annual per capita health spending. The high costs of deal-

ing with firearm violence mean that scarce resources are taken away from other important public services such as health, education, and infrastructure.

Multilateral treaties largely focus on disrupting the supply of illicit arms, often to the detriment of demand-related issues. Our work on the drivers of violent extremism and firearms proliferation in the Sahel region, for example, has illustrated how securitized interventions that fail to address root causes tend to negatively affect marginalized communities, who might then turn to non-state armed groups and firearms for protection or as an alternative source of livelihood.

National arms control strategies and action plans are more effective when developed in an inclusive manner, bringing together different stakeholders from state institutions, civil society, academia, and the private sector. Inclusive processes foster political will, national ownership, and the mobilization of resources towards the implementation of policies and national action plans (NAPs). To this end, in 2023, the Survey continued to provide direct support at the national level to states in West Africa in the development of their national strategies and action plans to reduce the risks of small arms, ammunition, and IED proliferation. The Survey also continued to assist the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Commission in establishing a regional counter-IED (C-IED) strategy.

Innovation and learning

What has the Survey learned in 2023? Through our C-IED programme, we have developed an approach to strategic national and regional C-IED development that looks beyond traditional security centric responses. The Survey advocates for a whole-of-society approach to C-IED when investing in, sustaining, and when necessary over time adapting national and regional approaches to C-IED. This approach aims to ensure that all stakeholders involved in responding to and preventing the use of IEDs have input into C-IED efforts.

In 2023, the Survey's Afghanistan project published two Situation Updates based on the first independent field research investigations on arms proliferation in the country since the Taliban took control of the previous regime's arsenals in August 2021. The studies found that while the Taliban had taken steps to exert more control over the weapons stockpiles it had seized, as well as the weapons in the hands of its commanders and their men, trafficking (particularly towards Pakistan) continued—with some of it sanctioned or facilitated by local Taliban.

Research can impact policy. US lawmakers have recently proposed a bill on prosecutions of US-based traffickers that cites the Survey's 2023 Report *Weapons Compass: The Caribbean Firearms Study*. Our capacity-building support through the Security Assessment in North Africa (SANA) programme has focused this year on investigative journalists from the Middle East and North Africa region, which has resulted in an increase in cooperation with SANA journalist trainees leading to the publication of dedicated arms-related stories.

The Survey continued to support gender-responsive small arms control, including research on the gendered impacts of Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine and gendered motivations of violent extremism in the Sahel, as well as the release of new gender-disaggregated data on global violent deaths. The Survey focused on fostering linkages between small arms control and women, peace, and security frameworks, while ensuring that gender-related text was included in the recently adopted Global Framework on Ammunition. The Survey also facilitated the sharing of good practices from Latin America on preventing small arms-related gender-based violence both at the regional level and at the Arms Trade Treaty Conference of States Parties.

Partnerships

Many seeds were also planted in 2023, including the development of new partnerships and relationships with key stakeholders, the funding of new projects, and the revitalization of the Survey's methods of outreach and knowledge management. The European Union (EU)–League of Arab States (LAS) project on illicit small arms is a good example of integrated partnerships and programming. This programme brings together the EU and the LAS at a political level, supported by the Survey, the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), and the World Customs Organization (WCO) at a more technical level. The programme examines weapons and ammunition management (WAM), investigations on illicit trade, and border security protocols in an integrated manner, providing joint training across these constituencies. It takes an integrated approach to

this complex problem. Early indications suggest that this approach is effective.

Looking ahead

The year 2024 is important for the Survey and the arms control and armed violence reduction agenda. It is the 25th anniversary of the organization and an opportune time not only to reflect on our contribution to arms control, but also to reinvigorate our commitment to a world without illicit small arms and light weapons, and our support to armed violence reduction. Key to this will be the Fourth Review Conference of the UN Programme of Action (PoA) and the Tenth Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT CSP10). The Survey remains committed to working with member states to ensure outcomes that are data-driven and evidence based, as well as supporting networks to share experiences in combating the proliferation of illicit arms.

Developments in 2023 have shown that the work of the Small Arms Survey is as crucial as ever. Given the increase in global violent deaths and the spread of misinformation, the need for evidence-based and data-driven analysis on firearms and armed violence is clear. With our new 2024–28 strategy now in force, the Survey team is even more prepared to support efforts in tackling the complex topics around small arms and light weapons. I am grateful for the continued support for and trust in the Small Arms Survey, and I look forward to the partnerships and work in the months and years ahead. ●

—Mark Downes
Director

II. Generating data

The Small Arms Survey prides itself on providing evidence-based and data-driven support to its stakeholders. The Data and Analytics work stream provides factual and impartial information to governments, practitioners, and communities. In 2023, the Survey monitored and provided analysis on conflict dynamics and arms trafficking in affected regions, and developed online knowledge platforms that centralize data and analysis on small arms and firearm violence. As part of these efforts, the Data and Analytics team produced reports and developed methodologies at the global, regional, and national level.

Since June 2023, as part of the project developed with the Center for Security Studies (CENSS) and other partners in Ukraine, the Survey has rolled out several data collection streams, published the first in a series of Situation Updates on public perceptions of firearms (*From Conflict to Consequence: Nearly Half of Ukrainian Men Would Like to Own a Firearm, Or Already Have One*), prepared a background paper on Ukrainian seizures of grenades and rocket launchers, and developed the pilot version of the project dashboard that will form the basis of its baseline study of illicit weapons. Together with CENSS, the Survey held intensive consultations with members of the Ukrainian Networking Group (UNG) of practitioners,

formed under the project to strengthen local capacities to tackle issues related to illicit weapons proliferation. The project also held a workshop in Uzhhorod to present ongoing research efforts and discuss the draft UNG strategy for 2024–25 with UNG members and representatives of the Ukrainian government. This project enables UNG members to apply for small micro-grants to support the implementation of the strategy. The first UNG member to benefit from this in 2023 was a representative of the Kyiv Scientific Research Institute of Forensic Expertise.

The Survey also produced a blog post, ‘Russia’s War: Weighing the Human Cost in Ukraine’, which examines research findings on key issues, including the gendered effects of the invasion on civilians, whether it has influenced the availability of firearms, and its impact on pre-existing security concerns, such as violent crime.

Additionally, the Survey continued national-level research through the Human Security Baseline Assessment for Sudan and South Sudan (HSBA) project, which examines the political and economic dynamics driving conflict in different regions of South Sudan and Sudan. With the outbreak of war in Sudan in April 2023, this research proves invaluable in providing context and understanding to wider audiences, as well as in helping relevant actors to address

armed violence and instability within Sudan and its peripheries, including northern and eastern Sudan, Darfur, and Blue Nile and South Kordofan states, as well as the Sudan–South Sudan border.

In 2023, the Survey produced eight Situation Updates and two Briefing Papers on the political and conflict dynamics in South Sudan. The first Situation Update in March 2023, *Upper Nile Prepares to Return to War*, predicted the outbreak of war that would follow a month later. By November, the Survey had produced seven more Situation Updates examining state-by-state contexts and dynamics, as well as two Briefing Papers: *Pay Day Loans and Backroom Empires: South Sudan’s Political Economy since 2018* analyses the predatory political economy in South Sudan, while *Changing Lakes State? Rin Tueny’s Inclusive Deterrence Approach in Practice* discusses the components of Rin Tueny’s ‘inclusive deterrence’ approach in Lakes state, South Sudan, and its blind spots.

In 2023, the Survey’s SANA team again held journalist training sessions in Amman, Jordan, organized in collaboration with partners Arab Reporters for Investigative Journalism (ARIJ) and King Abdullah II Special Operations Training Center (KASOTC). Among other topics, the training covered techniques for documenting, identifying, tracing, and verifying weapons and ammunition found in

Image 2 Firearm possession and accessibility in Ukraine, 2019–summer 2023 (per cent)

Question: How easy do you think it is for civilians to acquire a firearm around here? Do you think it is . . .

● 2019 ● Winter 2022–23 ● Summer 2023

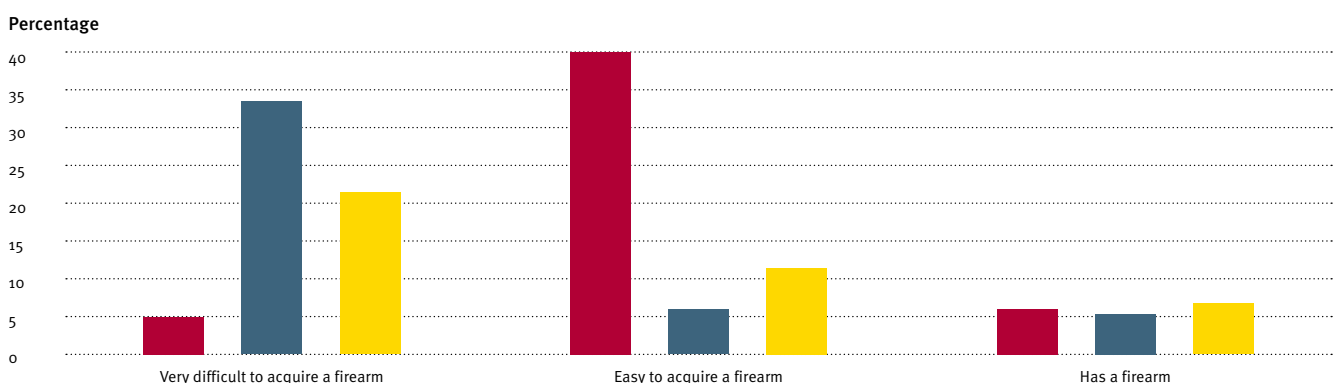


Figure from *From Conflict to Consequence: Nearly Half of Ukrainian Men Would Like to Own a Firearm, Or Already Have One*

conflict zones; knowledge on authorized and illicit arms transfers and methods of diversion; the exploration of new data collection methods in the field; and an introduction to craft weapons and 3D-printed guns. A total of 11 participants attended the training from Egypt, Jordan, and Morocco.

In July 2023, SANA hosted an event, ‘Enduring Insecurity: Mali, Sudan, and International Implications’, during which SANA experts Holger Anders and Jalel Harchaoui gave updates on the situations in Mali and Sudan. Holger Anders focused on the current security situation in Mali and discussed the country’s future, while Jalel Harchaoui examined the Sudan–Libya connection and its new ramifications since April 2023. Additionally, SANA also held its annual experts meeting in Geneva, hosting 20 participants, including SANA experts, two journalists, and Survey team members.

SANA also finished the data collection for its study on perceptions of small arms and violent extremism in Lebanon and Tunisia, and prepared policy briefings on the small arms and light weapons component of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya’s mandate, and on the international arms embargo imposed on Libya.

In collaboration with the Survey’s expert on monitoring, evaluation, and learning, in 2023 the SANA team conducted various interview-based ‘pause and reflect’ sessions with various experts, journalists, and sister organizations. Understanding what drives the general interest in SANA products, including their relevance and impact, will help inform the project going forward.

The Survey’s work on IEDs also progressed in 2023 with the launch of the Report *Out of Control: The Trafficking of Improvised Explosive Device Components and Commercial Explosives in West Africa*. The Report was launched during the Mine Ban Treaty’s 21st Meeting of State Parties at a side event co-hosted by Germany and France, with the participation of Ghana and the Mines Advisory Group (MAG). The Report was also shared and discussed with the ECOWAS Commission and member states during the 2023 annual coordination meeting of ECOWAS Commissions on small arms, held in Senegal.

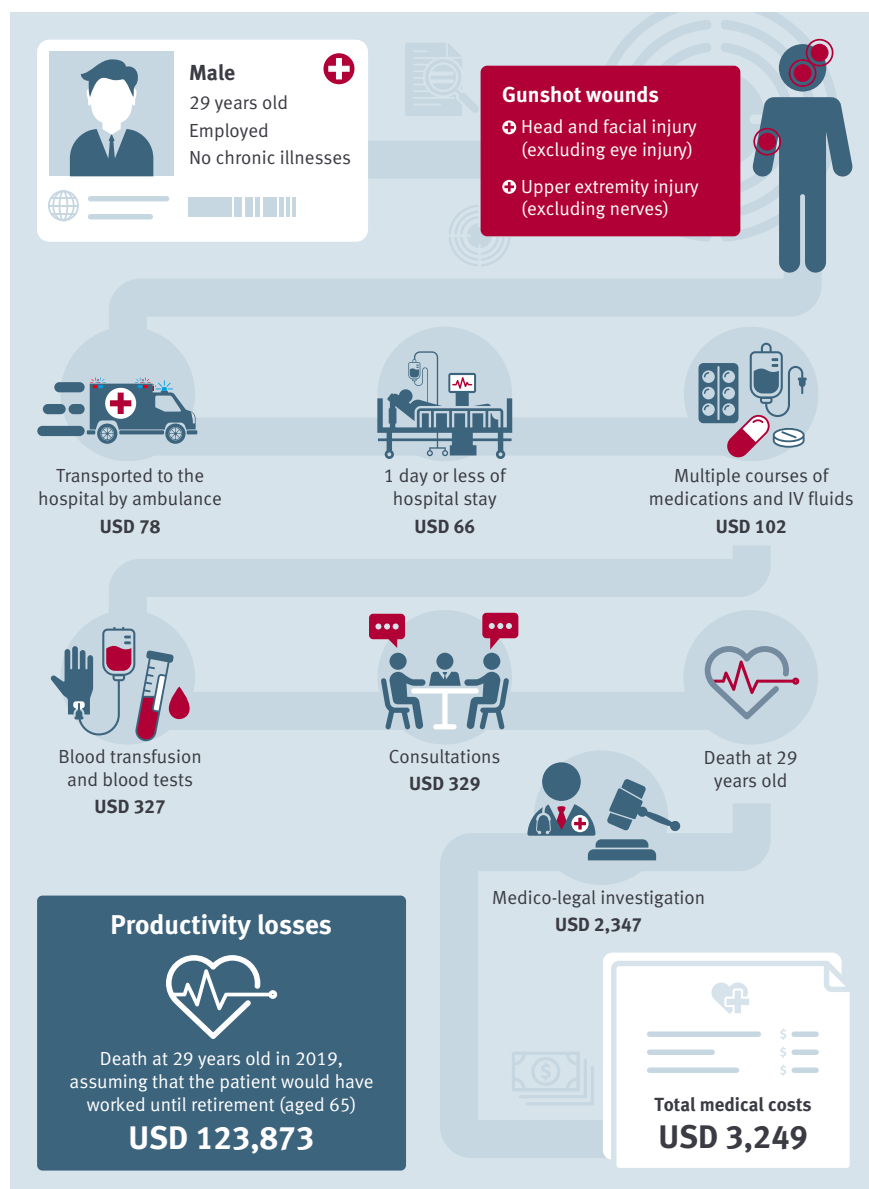
At the regional level, the Survey, together with the Caribbean Community Implementation Agency for Crime and Security (CARICOM IMPACS), published

in April 2023 the Report *Weapons Compass: The Caribbean Firearms Study* on firearms and ammunition trafficking, and the socio-economic impact of firearm violence. The study received significant coverage in the first report of the UN Panel of Experts on Haiti, and continues to be frequently cited in the media. The launch of the study, held in Port of Spain, was a great success, with a highly relevant audience of more than 100 participants, including regional ministers and other policymakers, practitioners, and key US agency representatives.

This landmark publication helped to launch a follow-up project: Pathway to Policy: Integrating Security and Public Health Responses to Firearms Trafficking

and Violence in the Caribbean. Together with project partners CARICOM IMPACS, the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA), and the George Alleyne Chronic Disease Research Centre at the University of the West Indies, the Survey team led the inception meeting of the project’s Advisory Committee of Regional Experts as well as the methods workshop to kickstart research on the socio-economic costs of gun violence. The Survey also held a series of consultations with the recently formed CARICOM Crime Gun Intelligence Center and CARICOM IMPACS to develop the pilot version of the firearms incident monitoring dashboard and to identify priorities for research on arms and ammunition trafficking, with

Image 3 Medical costs and productivity losses caused by a fatal gunshot wound (death at the hospital, Jamaica)



Infographic from *Weapons Compass: The Caribbean Firearms Study*

a particular focus on PMFs in the first semester of 2024. The team participated in several regional consultations and events, including the 3rd Annual Meeting of States of the Caribbean Firearms Roadmap and the Eleventh High-Level Caribbean-US Security Cooperation Dialogue, where the Caribbean Firearms Study was frequently cited during discussions.

The Survey also produced a blog post in March 2023, ‘Tackling Armed Domestic Violence in the Caribbean and Central America’, which discusses translating the fight against domestic violence into national law within the region.

Project INSIGHT reached its culmination in 2023. With the aim of improving data collection on firearm violence in the EU, the Survey worked in collaboration with the Flemish Peace Institute (FPI), Textgain, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, and the Institute of Security and Global Affairs (Universiteit Leiden) to develop an artificial intelligence (AI)-powered tool that collects up-to-date information on firearm incidents in the 27 EU member states (the Incident Monitor). The Survey also co-published with the FPI eight research papers on topics related to armed violence in the EU, two of them authored by Survey experts: *Illicit Firearms Ammunition and Other Explosive Munitions in the European Union* provides a regional analysis and overview of the types, sources, and end users of these items, and addresses the need for detailed, policy-relevant data on illicit munitions in Europe, while *Privately Made Firearms in the European Union* examines the emerging threat that PMFs

Box 1 Global databases

The Small Arms Survey monitors trends and developments of holdings, transfers, and impacts of small arms through its global databases. These include:

- the Global Firearms Holdings (GFH) database, which provides estimates of the number of firearms in the world, disaggregated by civilian, law enforcement, and military holdings;
- the Global Violent Deaths (GVD) database, which provides estimates on lethal violence, including sex-disaggregated data and data on lethal violence inflicted by firearms; and
- the Unplanned Explosions at Munitions Sites (UEMS) database, which consolidates information on accidental explosions of ammunition stockpiles at storage sites.

and their illicit proliferation pose within Europe. This project was also supported by the Belgian Federal Police, the Dutch National Police, the European Firearms Experts, Europol, and the South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SEESAC).

More than 100 participants from law enforcement, research organizations, and regional and international organizations (the European Commission and SEESAC), as well as partner countries, participated in the project’s final conference, held on 7 December 2023 at the Flemish parliament. The event was a great success and the project has received high praise from representatives of the European Commission, law enforcement agencies, and other stakeholders.

In 2023, the Survey began a new project that aims to aid evidence-based policy interventions seeking to curb the proliferation of military-style rifles and promote regional security in Latin America.

Partnerships were developed with researchers from European and Latin American universities—the Centre on Conflict, Development and Peace (CCDP) at the Geneva Graduate Institute and Pontifical Catholic University (PUC) Rio in Brazil—as well as partner NGOs in Brazil (Instituto Sou da Paz), Colombia (Conflict Analysis Resource Center, CERAC) and Mexico (IGMX Mujeres que inspiran). The project focused in 2023 on formalizing the partnerships, refining the proposed methodologies, and updating the research work plan.

The Survey’s databases (see Box 1) are vital resources for global debates on small arms—providing accessible, reliable, inclusive, and multi-dimensional data and analysis that is regularly relied on by media outlets.

Drawing on data from the UEMS database, the Survey produced a blog post, ‘Investigating the Links: Government Effectiveness and Unplanned Explosions at Munition Sites’, in June

Image 4 Violent deaths per 100,000 people (as shown in the GVD database)



Snapshot from the GVD database

2023 that discusses the relationship between government effectiveness and UEMS, and how improving governance effectiveness can lower the lethality of such incidents.

Towards the end of 2023, the Survey published an update to the GVD database with data up to 2021, as well as a related infographic and a blog post, 'Turning Tides: A New Surge in Global Violent Deaths'. The blog post, based on the updated data, reported a sudden jump in the number of violent deaths. With the subsequent outbreak of conflict in occupied Palestinian territory and Sudan, as well as the continuing war in Ukraine, our findings sound the alarm for the potential failure to meet the SDG 16.1 target. Drawing from its global databases, the Survey also contributed two boxes on monitoring targets 16.1 and 16.4 to the SDG16 Data Initiative annual report.

Finally, in 2023 the Survey furthered the reach of its outputs by providing more of its work in languages other than English. In line with discussions with partners, the Survey translated nine Small Arms Survey publications into French, including three major reports on new technologies, improvised and artisanal small arms, and IEDs. ●

III. Strengthening capacities

The Small Arms Survey believes that for effective and sustainable policies to succeed, policy implementation must be based on tailored, locally owned solutions. The Policy and Capacity Support unit offers research-informed policy advice as well as direct support to partners in developing, disseminating, and implementing policies, practices, and standards. In 2023, the team worked with national and regional delegations on the small arms control multilateral process, facilitating the development of national small arms strategies and NAPs; delivered online and in-person training sessions; and created self-assessment tools.

In 2023, work began on strategies and frameworks in Mali. In April 2023, a team of experts from the Survey visited Bamako to gather data from various stakeholders and identify the main difficulties involved in implementing regulatory frameworks related to craft production. To collect inputs from artisanal producers, the Survey organized a focus group discussion with 13 unlicensed artisanal arms manufacturers. Although the scope of this consultation was limited, it provided a safe environment for unlicensed manufacturers to express their concerns and formulate requests regarding the regulation of the artisanal production of firearms. These inputs were then conveyed to the National Commission on Small Arms to lay the foundations for national consultations with craft manufacturers across Mali.

Similarly, in Mauritania the Survey conducted an assessment mission to analyse existing marking and tracing capacities, as well as the ministries and administrations involved in this field. This project contributes to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's support to Mauritania on physical security and stockpile management, with the aim of strengthening national counter-terrorism efforts by helping to secure weapons and ammunition stockpiles. At the end of the visit, the assessment team provided a report outlining the feasibility of potential support to Mauritania on marking, record-keeping, and tracing efforts, as well as a viable path for its development in the country.

From July to September 2023, the Survey supported Benin in undertaking a mid-term evaluation of the implementation of its National Action Plan to Combat the Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons, as well as identifying new challenges with a view to designing Benin's next NAP.

The Survey continued to support the development of NAPs in Burkina Faso and Sierra Leone, facilitating the completion of small arms control strategies. The political consequences of armed uprisings in the Sahel and the reprioritization of funding, however, have unfortunately resulted in the project being put on hold.

The Survey also lent its expertise in building capacity and technical knowledge to enable Zambia to draft and put in place secondary legislation required for the implementation of Zambia's National Conventional Arms Control Act, which is necessary for the country to effectively fulfil its obligations as a state party to the ATT. Zambia was therefore able to put in place a number of key elements, principally contracting legal experts to undertake the initial drafting of the secondary legislation and making organizational arrangements for a key activity of the project—an inter-ministerial workshop, planned for February 2024 in Livingstone, of legal experts able to contribute to the preparation of a final draft of the secondary legislation.

In 2023, the Survey continued to provide support to the LAS in their fight against illicit small arms and light weapons. The project received and/or followed up on requests from 16 LAS member states for in-person national training programmes, which comprise three courses—delivered in parallel by project partners INTERPOL, the Survey, and the WCO. The project provided eight of these programmes to seven LAS countries. Security officials who participated in project training in 2023 gave extremely positive feedback, clearly indicating that participant knowledge, attitudes, and practices had been, or would be, positively influenced by the training they had received.

In another regional project, the Survey assisted the ECOWAS Commission and

member states in developing a comprehensive, coordinated regional response to address the threat posed by IEDs and the proliferation of their components in West Africa. In 2023, the Survey successfully conducted three C-IED assessments in Ghana, Liberia, and Sierra Leone, respectively, thus becoming the most experienced ECOWAS implementation partner in using the C-IED Capability Maturity Model and Self-Assessment Tool in West Africa. The Survey also conducted research on the role of border control as a C-IED preventative measure to counter the flows of IED components in West Africa, and on the explosive precursors legislation and instruments of relevance to the subregion, with a view to informing West African policymakers in the development of C-IED enterprises.

Building on the knowledge generated through research and the assessments, the Survey attended the 2023 Annual Coordination Meeting of National Commissions on Small Arms of ECOWAS

member states in Dakar in December 2023, which aimed to officially launch the development of, and lay out the process for, a regional C-IED response. During the meeting, Ghana, Liberia, and Sierra Leone commended the work conducted by the Survey while additional ECOWAS member states—including Benin, Senegal, and Togo—requested its support. At the global level, the Survey played an active role at major international meetings of relevance to the issue of IEDs. This included the 21st Meeting of the States Parties of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC), during which the Survey organized a side event, as well as the Group of Experts Meeting of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) Amended Protocol II, as a panellist.

Another regional project that started in 2023 investigates factors and challenges related to ATT universalization and compliance in the Indo-Pacific region, with the aim of informing efforts by the

region's states to move towards full membership of the ATT and strengthen national implementation processes. During 2023, the Survey conducted research to analyse open-source information on the licit and illicit trade of conventional arms in the region; participated in engagement sessions and key informant interviews with representatives of states in the Indo-Pacific region, regional subject matter experts, and civil society organizations to provide qualitative feedback, as well as contribute to the identification of policy and programmatic entry points; began to draft a report on challenges and obstacles to the ratification of the ATT by signatory states and accession to the ATT by current non-member states; and disseminated information to a range of regional actors to strengthen understanding of hindering factors in the region and of entry points for promoting change.

In 2023, the Survey continued its partnership with the Ammunition

Image 5 A doorbell and PRB M3 mine that were used as components of an IED, Libya, 2018



Image taken from *Out of Control: The Trafficking of Improvised Explosive Device Components and Commercial Explosives in West Africa*

Image 6 Firearms disposal implemented by ANMaC



Survey programme manager Marco Baccini pictured with Natasa Loizou, former Executive Director of ANMaC, and Martin Soria, former Minister of Justice and Human Rights, Republic of Argentina. This visit was part of the ANMaC: Assessment Mission project, February 2023, Argentina.

Management Advisory Team of the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) on the development of an operational Arms and Ammunition Management Validation System (AAMVS) for the EU (and other regional bodies where possible). The AAMVS's purpose is to improve arms and ammunition export decision-making and to identify potential areas for WAM capacity-building support among partner states. The year 2023 marked the beginning of phase three of the project, authorized by EU Council Decision CFSP 2022/2275, with the overall objective of delivering a working model and a tested operational architecture by the end of 2025. Extensive technical and conceptual consultations took place throughout the year with subject matter experts from EU member states and importing countries on the nature of the AAMVS and the supporting online self-assessment tool. These included a practical workshop in Ghana involving four ECOWAS member states

and the ECOWAS Secretariat. Two interactive side events were also held during the ATT CSP9 in Geneva, with participation from 11 EU member states and the EU. Conclusions drawn from these deliberations were reflected in subsequent changes to the AAMVS framework and the self-assessment prototype, as well as preparations for its formal testing in 2024. Potential synergies between AAMVS and new and ongoing initiatives such as the UN PoA were also identified.

The Survey's work on the meaningful inclusion of diverse perspectives continued to expand in 2023, highlighting the importance of gender-responsive small arms control. References to gender were included in the ATT CSP9 outcome document for the first time since CSP5 in 2019. The states parties took note of two working papers, both of which were supported by the Survey. This is the first time that the ATT has acknowledged the topic of violence against people on the basis of

sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) in an outcome document.

In February 2023, Survey experts facilitated an event as the Open-ended Working Group on Conventional Ammunition met for its third substantive session to discuss a new Global Framework for Through-life Conventional Ammunition Management. Women's Meaningful Participation in Ammunition Management: Insights from Women Ammunition Management Experts provided an opportunity for members of the network to consider the types of barriers to meaningful participation that women in ammunition management face, how these can be overcome in practice, and what more can be done to promote women's meaningful participation in ammunition management, including through international cooperation and assistance within the scope of a future Global Framework for Through-life Conventional Ammunition Management.

Renewed engagement with Latin America on the topic of gender equality resulted in three blog posts detailing challenges and good practices in Argentina ('Gender-based Violence in Numbers: Data from Argentina's National Agency of Controlled Materials (ANMaC)', 'Keep Your Distance—But Keep Your Gun, Too: New Responses From the Argentinian State to Gender-based violence', and 'The Women, Police, and Insecurity Agenda: Argentina's Response to Surging Femicide and Domestic Gun Violence by Its Security Forces'); engagement with MERCOSUR (Mercado Común del Sur) and the Organization of American States (OAS); a memorandum of understanding signed with Argentina's National Agency for Controlled Materials (ANMaC); support to and participation in a regional seminar on gender and arms for parliamentarians, held in Chile; and the translation of several resources into Spanish.

The Survey piloted efforts to foster women's meaningful participation and ensure gender mainstreaming in national processes related to small arms (and IEDs) in several countries in West Africa, many of which have not discussed these links before. In other countries in the region, the Survey helped move the conversation towards more substantive discussions, with the participation of a diverse range of stakeholders.

Additionally, the Survey provided online and in-person training on topics related to gender and small arms control to a variety of Geneva-based partners. This included stand-alone courses and sessions organized as part of longer courses related to gender, security, and small arms and ammunition.

The deepening of the Survey's relationship with ANMaC and Latin America was further demonstrated by the Survey's assessment mission to Argentina. Upon the request of national authorities, an assessment visit was conducted from 28 February to 7 March 2023 to Argentina. In order to provide a preliminary assessment report, the Survey undertook site visits to ANMaC's main office in Buenos Aires; the National Bank of Controlled Materials (BANMaC) warehouse in Villa Maipú; an industrial destruction site in Campana; and finally Neuquén to meet with the general attorney and ANMaC's delegation in the province. ●

IV. Applying knowledge

As data and research underpin the support and guidance provided by the Survey in the drafting and implementing of policies and processes, some projects inevitably overlap between its two work streams. In 2023, the Data and Analytics and the Policy and Capacity Support units collaborated on four national and regional projects.

The two units worked together to produce *Calculable Losses? Arms Transfers to Afghanistan 2002–21*—the most comprehensive report to date on small arms, light weapons, and ammunition transferred to Afghanistan between 2002 and 2021 and insights into Afghan holdings just prior to the Taliban takeover. This Briefing Paper included previously unpublished official data, providing the most refined picture to date of the arsenals captured by the Taliban. Additionally, the project published two Situation Updates based on field research commissioned on arms prices at illicit markets in four provinces of Afghanistan along the Pakistan border, arms trafficking dynamics, and the evolving arms management practices of the Taliban (*Taliban Arms Management Practices* and *Arms Smuggling Dynamics under Taliban Rule*).

A member of the project also took part as a trainer in a week-long training

session on small arms proliferation for border guards and customs officers, organized by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and held in Uzbekistan (trainers also included staff from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, INTERPOL, and OSCE). In parallel, consultations with an Afghan women's network were conducted, including a small-group workshop on arms proliferation and gender together with the Afghan women's network representatives.

Finally, the project presented the Afghanistan Small Arms Social Media Monitoring pilot platform to the 2024 Data for Peace Conference organized by New York University, and applied for the Geneva Centre for Security Policy's 2023 Prize for Innovation in Global Security. Although the project was not awarded the prize, it did receive a complimentary seat for all three modules of the 2024 Geopolitics and Global Futures Symposium, including one module on 'Transformative Technologies and the Future of Global Security' to further develop the project skills necessary to develop such tools.

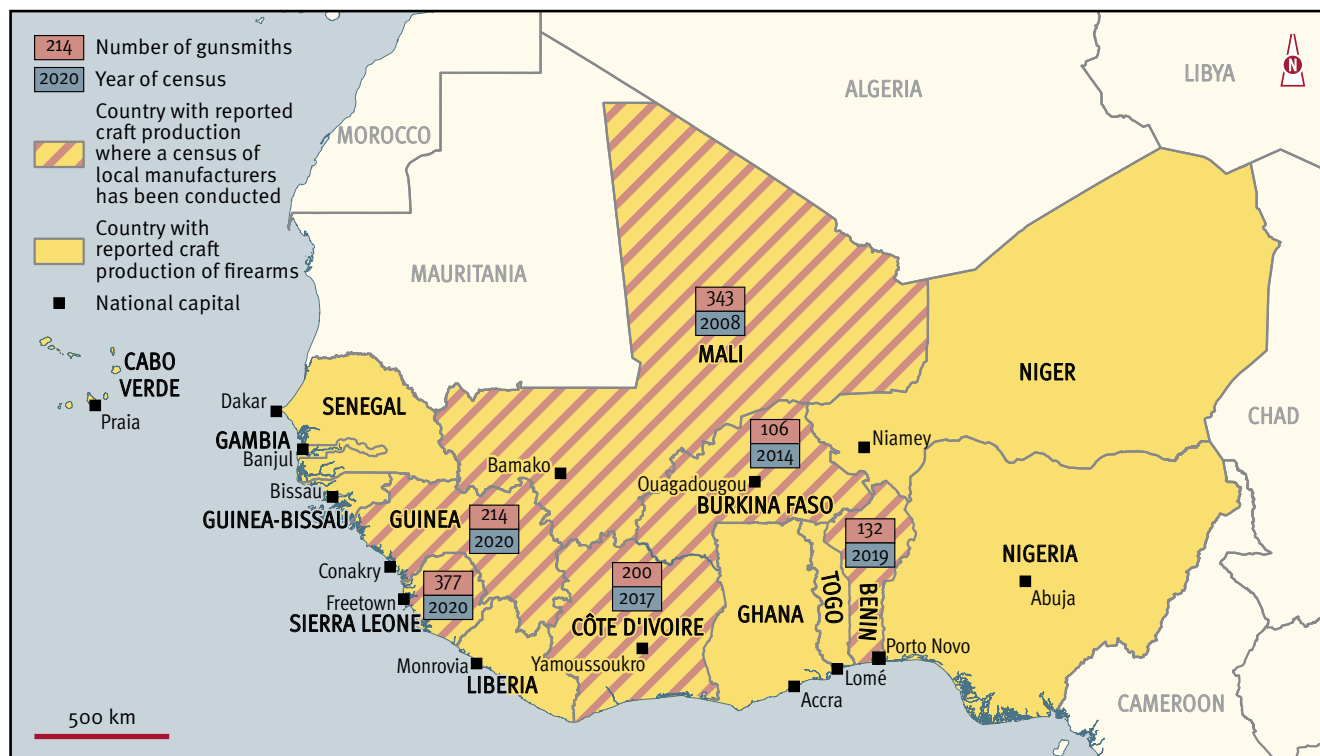
In November 2023, as part of Geneva Peace Week, the Small Arms Survey hosted a roundtable on craft firearms in West Africa and launched the Briefing

Image 7 Small Arms Survey project coordinator, Emile LeBrun, leading a session at the OSCE-organized training on small arms proliferation for border guards and customs officers in Tashkent



Image taken from social media account of Alena Kupchyna, OSCE Co-ordinator of Activities to Address Transnational Threats

Image 8 Documenting craft production in the ECOWAS region



Map from *Between Tradition and the Law: Artisanal Firearm Production in West Africa*

Paper *Between Tradition and the Law: Artisanal Firearm Production in West Africa*. Chaired by the Deputy Representative of the Permanent Mission of France to the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, the event provided an overview of the artisanal arms sector in West Africa and initiated a discussion on the regulatory challenges of this production, with interventions from a professor of the Geneva Graduate Institute, the Permanent Secretary of the National Commission for the Fight Against Small Arms Proliferation of Benin, and a representative of the NGO Coginta. The roundtable was conducted in French at the Maison de la Paix and was broadcast live on the virtual Geneva Peace Week platform, as well as that of the United Nations General Assembly's First Committee. Following the event, the Small Arms Survey received positive feedback from NGOs (MAG, Humanity & Inclusion, and Coginta), international organizations (ECOWAS and the UN), and national institutions of ECOWAS member countries (Ghana and Togo). The National Commission for the Fight Against Small Arms Proliferation of Togo expressed its desire to conduct a study to identify artisanal arms manufacturers and then engage in dialogue to update relevant legislation.

The year 2023 saw the conclusion of the Developing Common Minimum Standards for Legal Arms Registers and Improving Information Exchange Among EU Member States, South-east Europe, Ukraine, and Moldova (REGISYNC) project. As part of a consortium (under the REGISYNC project) with Arquebus Solutions Europe, ECORYS, and the Center for the Study of Democracy, the Survey assessed practices for civilian firearms registers in order to identify common minimum standards and enhance information sharing across EU member states, South-east Europe, Ukraine, and Moldova. The research produced as part of this project resulted in a policy paper on common minimum standards regarding national firearms registers as well as the *Effective and Innovative Practices among European Civilian Firearm Registries* report developed by the Small Arms Survey, with contributions from all project partners. This report was presented at the Closing Conference in Brussels on 24 October 2023 and made available to all target countries of the project, as well as to EU, regional, and international institutions. Additionally, Survey experts contributed to the policy paper *International Exchange of Information in the Context of Firearms Control*, which con-

tains recommendations for improvements. The paper was also presented at the Closing Conference in Brussels on 24 October.

The SAENK project, which began in late 2018, concluded its work in 2023. The final months of the project were particularly productive, with the release of several outputs representing the project's core work during its second phase. These included:

- the development of the Arms Embargo Self-Assessment Tool (AE-SAT), including an online version, aimed at assisting states in examining their approaches and practices in fulfilling United Nations Security Council (UNSC) sanctions obligations and identifying gaps;
- a blog post supporting the launch of the AE-SAT, 'Appraising National Approaches to Sanctions: The Arms Embargo Self-Assessment Tool';
- the research, drafting, and online publication (in five languages) of *North Korean Small Arms and Light Weapons: Recognition Guide*, with the aim of increasing the capacity of arms monitors and government officials to detect and interdict illicit transfers of small arms and light

Image 9 Homepage of the Arms Embargo Self-Assessment Tool



Image taken from the Arms Embargo Self-Assessment Tool

weapons by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and its affiliates;

- the research, drafting, publication, and dissemination of *The Value of Reporting: National Reporting Practices under the UN Sanctions Regime on North Korea*, a Small Arms Survey Report on the nature and limitations of UN member state reporting practices in response to reporting obligations under UNSC resolutions. This publication was launched at a side event of the CSP9 preparatory meeting in May 2023;
- a blog post examining the quality of states' reporting, 'UN sanctions against North Korea: How Well Are States Reporting on Their Implementation?'; and
- a Briefing Paper, produced in conjunction with the Survey's SANA project, which will be published in 2024.

Image 10 Examples of markings on North Korean small arms ammunition

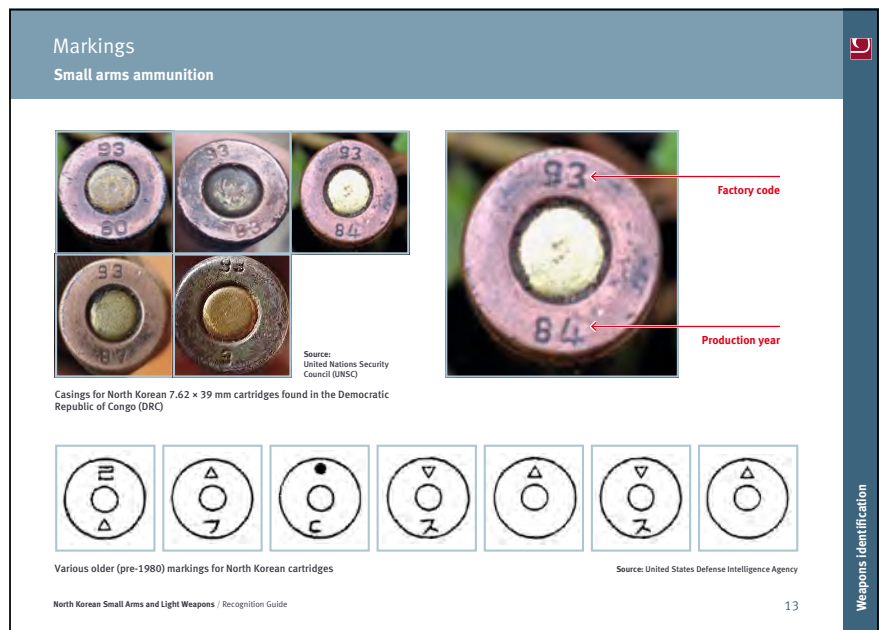


Image taken from *North Korean Small Arms and Light Weapons: Recognition Guide*

Projects and consultancies active in 2023



V. Enhancing outreach

Handbooks



May 2023

North Korean Small Arms and Light Weapons: Recognition Guide

English and French



Reports



April 2023

The Value of Reporting: National Reporting Practices under the UN Sanctions Regime on North Korea

English



April 2023

Weapons Compass: The Caribbean Firearms Study

English



November 2023

Out of Control: The Trafficking of Improvised Explosive Device Components and Commercial Explosives in West Africa

English and French



Briefing Papers



October 2023

Pay Day Loans and Backroom Empires: South Sudan's Political Economy since 2018

English



November 2023

Between Tradition and the Law: Artisanal Firearm Production in West Africa

English and French



November 2023

Changing Lakes State? Rin Tueny's Inclusive Deterrence Approach in Practice

English





Situation Updates

This new publication series was launched in 2023 to meet the need for shorter publications that can be produced quickly in a screen-adaptable format, so that they can be easily read online from a smartphone or a tablet. This series aims to provide a succinct analysis of a recent development or situation on the ground affecting small arms proliferation and security dynamics.



May 2023

A Pause Not a Peace: Conflict in Jonglei and the GPAA

English



June 2023

Arms Smuggling Dynamics under Taliban Rule

English



July 2023

An Iron Fist in Lakes State: Law, Order, and Volatility on the Margins

English



September 2023

All Alone in the Governor's Mansion: Sarah Cleto's Travails in Western Bahr el Ghazal State

English



October 2023

Manhiem's Mission: Power and Violence in Warrap State

English



March 2023

Upper Nile Prepares to Return to War

English



June 2023

Taliban Arms Management Practices

English



July 2023

Attacked from Both Sides: Abyei's Existential Dilemma

English



August 2023

The Body Count: Controlling Populations in Unity State

English



October 2023

Jemma's War: Political Strife in Western Equatoria

English



December 2023

From Conflict to Consequence: Nearly Half of Ukrainian Men Would Like to Own a Firearm, Or Already Have One

English and Ukrainian

Blog posts



February 2023

Gender-based Violence in Numbers: Data from Argentina's National Agency of Controlled Materials (ANMaC)

English and Spanish



March 2023

Tackling Armed Domestic Violence in the Caribbean and Central America

English and French



May 2023

Keep Your Distance—But Keep Your Gun, Too: New Responses From the Argentinian State to Gender-based violence

English and Spanish



May 2023

Russia's War: Weighing the Human Cost in Ukraine

English



May 2023

UN sanctions against North Korea: How Well Are States Reporting on their Implementation?

English



May 2023

Appraising National Approaches to Sanctions: The Arms Embargo Self-Assessment Tool

English



June 2023

Investigating the Links: Government Effectiveness and Unplanned Explosions at Munition Sites

English and French



August 2023

Driven into their Arms: Exploring Gendered Motivations of Violent Extremism

English



August 2023

The Women, Police, and Insecurity Agenda: Argentina's Response to Surging Femicide and Domestic Gun Violence by Its Security Forces

English and Spanish



December 2023

Turning Tides: A New Surge in Global Violent Deaths

English



Co-publications



October 2023

Effective and Innovative Practices among European Civilian Firearm Registries

English



December 2023

Privately Made Firearms in the European Union*

English



December 2023

Illicit Firearms Ammunition and Other Explosive Munitions in the European Union*

English

* In addition to these two papers, the Survey also co-published six other research papers in the framework of project INSIGHT.

See gunviolence.eu/research for more information.

Videos



February 2023

Women's Meaningful Participation in Ammunition Management: Insights from Women Ammunition Management Experts

English



July 2023

Enduring Insecurity: Mali, Sudan, and International Implications—SANA event

English

Database updates



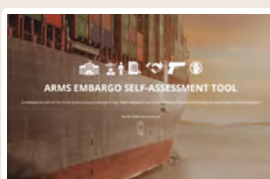
December 2023

Global Violent Deaths in 2021

Updated with data for 2021

English

Other



May 2023

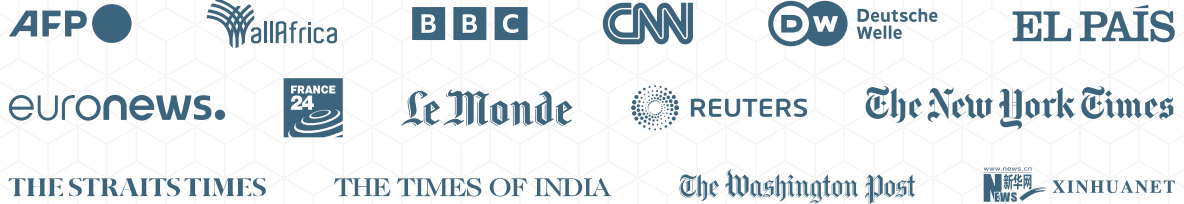
Arms Embargo Self-Assessment Tool

English, French, and Spanish

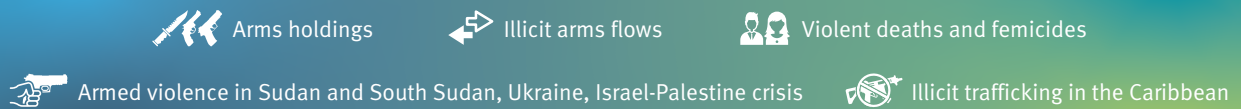
2023 press coverage



Selected news outlets citing the Survey



Notable themes

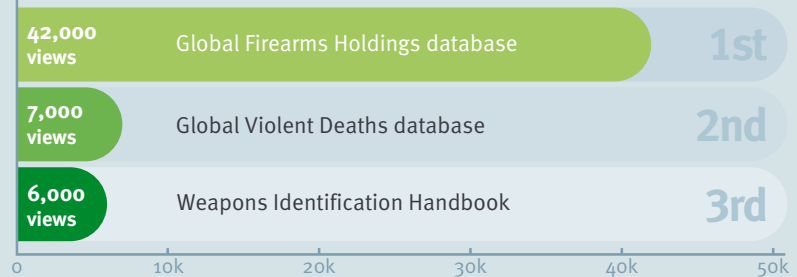


2023 online impact

Website statistics



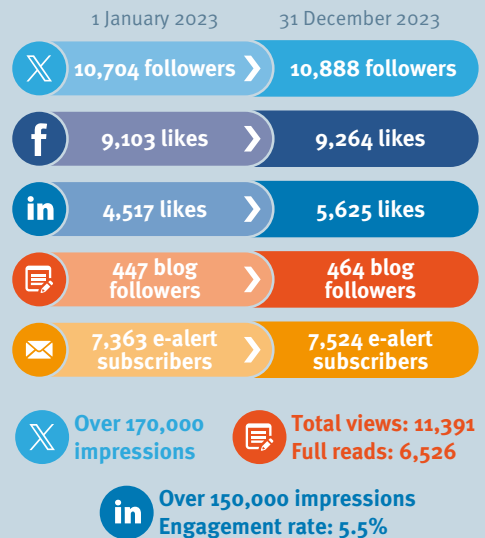
Top 3 pages viewed



Top 5 most downloaded publications



Social media



VI. Reinforcing operations

Institutional developments

In 2023, the Survey continued to strengthen its grant management and financial management capacities. Increasing the efficiency of the Survey's operations, delivering high-quality results, and meeting donor requirements remain essential objectives, which have led to the development of standardized project management guidelines to be implemented as of 2024. The Survey continued supporting the team's professional development by facilitating their participation in courses on WAM, results-based management, firearms, and first aid.

As its 2019–23 strategy reached its final year, the Survey launched its new strategy for the 2024–28 period. This was approved and presented during the annual Internal Review Meeting—a two-day gathering of the Survey's extended team—in October and during the Strategic Council meeting in September.

Financial developments

The Survey ended 2023 with a balanced budget. It was agreed that the Survey would use some of the budget reserves in 2023 for investment purposes, including updates to the Global Violent Deaths and Global Firearm Holdings databases, the development of new concept notes and new areas of work, staff professional development, and additional concept work around Ukraine. In total, CHF 333,080 were used from reserves for these investments and to ensure a balanced budget.

Overall, the operating expenses showed a 15 per cent increase compared to the budget, with a final result of CHF 6,597,215.

The Survey depends entirely on external funding, and it is thanks to its donors' support that it can carry out its operations. In 2023, the Survey was grateful for the unrestricted support granted by Australia, Sweden, and Switzerland. Unrestricted funding allows the Survey to maintain its institutional knowledge, react promptly to new developments, and explore innovative ideas in underserved areas. Additionally, in 2023 the Survey received project-specific support from the EU, Canada, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the United States, the ATT Voluntary Trust Fund, as well as service contracts from several other partners.

About the Small Arms Survey

The Small Arms Survey is a centre for applied knowledge dedicated to preventing and reducing illicit small arms proliferation and armed violence. The Survey informs policy and practice through a combination of data, evidence-based knowledge, authoritative resources and tools, and tailored expert advice and training, and by bringing together practitioners and policymakers.

The Survey is an associated programme of the Geneva Graduate Institute, located in Switzerland, and has an international staff with expertise in security studies, political science, law, economics, development studies, sociology, criminology, and database and programme management. It collaborates with a network of researchers, practitioners, partner institutions, non-governmental organizations, and governments in more than 50 countries.

The Survey's activities and outputs are made possible through core support as well as project funding. A full list of current donors and projects can be accessed via the Small Arms Survey website.

For more information, please visit: www.smallarmssurvey.org.

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