

Recovery of Crime Guns in Massachusetts

2021



Executive Office of Public Safety and Security

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Charles D. Baker, Governor

Terrence M. Reidy, Secretary of Public Safety and Security

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Overview

Pursuant to M.G.L. c. 140, § 131Q, the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security (EOPSS) has conducted an analysis to determine: (i) the effectiveness of current reporting mechanisms for lost and stolen guns, including by identifying the number of guns traced to crime that were reported lost or stolen prior to their use in the commission of a crime; and (ii) firearm purchase and sales patterns as they relate to firearms traced to crime, including an analysis of the number of guns traced to a crime that were originally purchased from each licensed gun dealer in the commonwealth or purchased through a secondary private seller. The exact statute reads:

Section 131Q. A firearm, rifle or shotgun, large capacity weapon, machine gun or assault weapon used to carry out a criminal act shall be traced by the licensing authority for the city or town in which the crime took place. The licensing authority shall report statistical data, when the data is readily available as determined by the chief of police, including, but not limited to: (i) the make, model, serial number and caliber of the weapon used; (ii) the type of crime committed; (iii) whether an arrest or conviction was made; (iv) whether fingerprint evidence was found on the firearm; (v) whether ballistic evidence was retrieved from the crime scene; (vi) whether the criminal use of the firearm was related to known gang activity; (vii) whether the weapon was obtained illegally; (viii) whether the weapon was lost or stolen; and (ix) whether the person using the weapon was otherwise a prohibited person.

The data shall be reported to the commonwealth fusion center or the criminal firearms and trafficking unit within the division of investigation and intelligence in the department of state police established pursuant to section 6 of chapter 22C. The colonel of state police shall produce an annual report by December 31 of each year regarding crimes committed in the commonwealth using firearms, rifles or shotguns, large capacity weapons, machine guns or assault weapons, including all of the categories of data contained in this section, and shall submit a copy of the report to the joint committee on public safety and homeland security, the clerks of the house of representatives and the senate and, upon request, to criminology, public policy and public health researchers and other law enforcement agencies.

Methodology and Data Collection

Information on lost or stolen firearms is currently collected in several locations. Under M.G.L. c. 140, § 29C, in the case of loss, theft or recovery of any firearm, rifle, shotgun or machine gun, a report shall be made forthwith to both the commissioner of the Department of Criminal Justice Information Services (DCJIS) and the licensing authority in the city or town where the owner resides. In addition to reporting the lost or stolen firearm to DCJIS, a lost or stolen firearm is often reported by the reporting agency to the National Crime Information Center (NCIC), a computerized index of criminal justice information hosted by the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI). When a police officer recovers a firearm, one of the steps they often take is running a check of the serial number through NCIC to determine if the firearm has been

reported lost or stolen. The check will reveal if the firearm is reported lost or stolen and, if so, the jurisdiction in which the report was made. The officer should then include this information in the entry into the Commonwealth Fusion Center's Crime Gun Tracking System, created through M.G.L. c. 140, § 131Q. The law directs firearms licensing authorities within the Commonwealth to annually report to the Colonel of the Massachusetts State Police certain data related to crime gun seizures within their jurisdiction.

Data on crime guns being sold or registered in Massachusetts was compiled by comparing serial numbers in the crime gun database against registered firearms in the Massachusetts Gun Transaction Portal and Massachusetts Instant Record Check System (MIRCS) maintained by DCJIS. For the purpose of this analysis, it is possible that a recovered firearm could have been registered or sold multiple times, thus creating multiple records for a single firearm.

Firearms Reported Lost or Stolen in Massachusetts

Since 2015, Massachusetts law enforcement agencies have been reporting crime gun seizures to the Commonwealth Fusion Center. As outreach and training continues, the number of contributing agencies increases. In 2016, 9.57% of 972 reported crime guns were reported as lost or stolen as of the time of recovery. In 2017, this rate rose to 13.01% of 1,752 reported crime guns and then fell to 11.25% of 1,946 reported crime guns in 2018. The percentage being reported to the Fusion Center as lost or stolen fell slightly to 10.59% of 1,832 reported crime guns in 2019, even further to 9.15% of 1,945 crime guns in 2020 and to 7.6% of 2,330 guns in 2021. The Fusion Center received information on firearms recovered in 153 different jurisdictions in 2021, down from 157 in 2020.

Figure 1. Status of Crime Guns Reported to Commonwealth Fusion Center							
Status of Crime Gun	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Total
LOST	6	5	13	10	3	9	46
STOLEN	87	223	206	184	175	168	1,043
UNKNOWN	879	1,524	1,727	1,638	1,767	2,153	9,688
TOTAL	972	1,752	1,946	1,832	1,945	2,330	10,777
Data Source: MA Crime Gun Tracking System							

Massachusetts police agencies reported 2,819 total firearms as lost or stolen to NCIC in 2016 - 2021; this includes all firearms, not just crime guns.

Figure 2: Lost or Stolen Firearms Reported to NCIC by MA Agencies							
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Total
Lost or Stolen Firearms	530	597	529	417	388	358	2,819
Data Source: NCIC							

There were thirteen agencies reporting seven or more lost or stolen firearms to NCIC in 2021, down from 15 in 2020:

Figure 3: Agencies Reporting 7 or More Stolen Firearms	
Jurisdiction	Total
West Springfield	22
Haverhill	18
Springfield	17
Lynn	13
Agawam	12
Greenfield	9
Pittsfield	8
Attleboro	8
Southwick	8
Auburn	8
Worcester	8
Malden	7
Boston	7
Data Source: NCIC	

Crime Guns Reported to the Fusion Center

A total of 2,330 seizures were reported to the Commonwealth Fusion Center with a seizure date of 2021. Of crime guns reported during 2021, approximately 75% were connected to an arrest. While fingerprint testing is pending on many crime guns reported in 2021, 19.1% of those that have completed testing yielded fingerprint evidence. In cases where the data was available, 11.4% of crime guns reported in 2021 were related to known gang activity and 72.6% were used by prohibited persons, a term defined in M.G.L. c. 140, § 131. Approximately 83% of recovered crime guns were listed as pistols or revolvers. Ghost guns and privately made firearms accounted for approximately 3.5% of recovered firearms.

Figure 4: Recovered Weapon Types	
Weapon Type	Total
PISTOL	1745
REVOLVER	197
RIFLE	159
SHOTGUN	90
PRIVATELY MADE FIREARM	48
GHOST GUN	33
ASSAULT RIFLE	31
SHOTGUN SAWED OFF	14
OTHER	13
Total	2,330
Data Source: MA Crime Gun Tracking System	

Crime Guns in MIRCS

Matching serial numbers in the Crime Gun Tracking System against MIRCS resulted in 540 records. This should not be considered 540 individual firearms, but 540 instances where there was a match between the two sets of data. For example, it is possible a firearm that was recovered after an aggravated assault had been purchased from a dealer and then sold or transferred multiple times. The number of individual crime guns that were located in MIRCS was 352 up from 280 in 2020.

Figure 5: Transaction Type for Crime Guns	
Transaction Type	Total
Loss/Theft	5
Personal Sale/Transfer	93
Registration	38
Sale	404
Total	540
Data Source: DCJIS	

Of the 540 matching records, 405 contained dealer information while 98 transactions contained personal information of a known seller; these numbers closely track the above transaction types. Fifteen dealers in 15 communities had more than five transactions involving crime guns. For a complete list of dealers with transactions involving crime guns during 2021, see Appendix Table 1.

Appendix

Table 1. Dealers with Transactions Involving Crime Guns			
Dealer Name	Total Crime Gun Transactions	Town	Total 2021 Sales
FOUR SEASONS	60	WOBURN	15,676
THE GUN PARLOR	17	WORCESTER	4,506
CABELAS WHOLESALE INC	16	BERLIN	3,595
GUNS INC.	16	WEST SPRINGFIELD	1,232
MASS FIREARMS SCHOOL	11	HOLLISTON	5,014
BASS PRO SHOP	10	FOXBOROUGH	2,912
OUTERLIMITS LLC	10	HOLBROOK	2,750
THE SPORTSMANS DEN	10	QUINCY	1,109
COLLECTOR'S COIN GALLERY	8	STONEHAM	1,348
ARMOUR SPORTS INC	7	TAUNTON	1,133
R & R GUN SALES	7	BELCHERTOWN	1,886
TOMBSTONE TRADING COMPANY	7	BROOKFIELD	1,833
J&J ARMS LLC	6	DEDHAM	1,350
MIDDLEBORO GUN SHOP	6	MIDDLEBORO	373
NEW ENGLAND BALLISTIC SERVICES INC	6	HOPEDALE	334
ARMOR BEARER SPORTS	5	SPRINGFIELD	2,416
AVID SPORTS	5	PITTSFIELD	1,116
DECKER ENTERPRISES INC. DBA/PETES GUN SHOP	5	ADAMS	2,186
GUNS AND GUN PARTS	5	WEST SPRINGFIELD	890
M & M PLIMOTH BAY OUTFITTERS, INC.	5	PLYMOUTH	770
NICK'S SPORT SHOP INC.	5	PALMER	2,231
NORTHEAST TRADING CO, INC.	5	NORTH ATTLEBOROUGH	518
ON TARGET FIREARMS OF DRACUT	5	DRACUT	3,154
THE GUN RACK	5	TURNERS FALLS	4,274
WEBSTER LAKE SPORTING INC.	5	WEBSTER	1,621
AMERICAN FIREARMS SCHOOL	4	NORTH ATTLEBORO	245
B&K SALES, LLC	4	NATICK	868
MARK HEAVNER	4	HOLLISTON	0
NORTHEAST ARMS LLC	4	PEABODY	7
STEVES FIREARM INSTRUCTION LLC	4	STOUGHTON	1,963
VILLAGE SPORTS	4	WESTPORT	2,899
BAYSTATE FIREARMS TRAINING OF PEABODY	3	PEABODY	0
DAVE'S SPORTING GOODS	3	PITTSFIELD	875
GRRR GEAR INC	3	ORANGE	0
GT ARMS LLC	3	WAREHAM	216
HUNTER'S TRADING POST, LTD.	3	WEYMOUTH	2,772
MAGNUM ENTERPRISES, LLC	3	ORANGE	728
NORTH SHORE FIREARMS-MIDDLETON	3	MIDDLETON	1,470
OLD MILL GUN SHOP	3	LEOMINSTER	0
PERSONAL DEFENSE SPECIALISTS INC	3	SOUTH HADLEY	0
POWDERHORN OUTFITTERS	3	HYANNIS	1,390
SPORTSMANS OUTFITTER INC	3	BERKLEY	671
STOUGHTON ARMY NAVY STORE	3	STOUGHTON	53
AMERICA'S ARMED	2	MILFORD	0
ATLANTIC TACTICAL	2	WESTWOOD	1,658
B.G. SPORTING INC	2	WESTFIELD	686
DEFENSIVE DYNAMICS LLC	2	LITTLETON	1,845
DOWNRANGE INC	2	HYANNIS	351
FIRST DEFENSE FIREARMS	2	UXBRIDGE	845
GARTMAN ARMS CO INC	2	WRENTHAM	1,694
GFA GREGS REPAIR SERVICE	2	NATICK	1,371
GUN ROOM OF SHREWSBURY INC	2	SHREWSBURY	0
GUNS AND GEAR LLC	2	AGAWAM	372
HYE TECH ARMAMENT	2	LITTLETON	34
MICRO ARC WELDING INC	2	WORCESTER	282
NORTHEAST TRADING COMPANY	2	NORTH ATTLEBOROUGH	518
ON TARGET TRAINING INC	2	EAST BRIDGEWATER	1,191
OUTBACK ARMS, LLC	2	PLYMPTON	1,497

Table 1. Dealers with Transactions Involving Crime Guns			
Dealer Name	Total Crime Gun Transactions	Town	Total 2021 Sales
PATRIOT ARMS OF NEW ENGLAND	2	IPSWICH	2,248
PRECISION POINT FIREARMS OF WOBURN	2	WOBURN	1,302
ROACH'S SPORTING GOODS	2	CAMBRIDGE	0
SHOOTING SUPPLY	2	WESTPORT	2,532
SPARKY'S GUN SHOP	2	WEBSTER	0
STONEY ACRE SPORTS	2	SUTTON	303
THE GUNRUNNER LLC	2	MIDDLEBOROUGH	1,429
THE ORIGINAL BOBS SHOOTING RANGE AND GUN S	2	SALISBURY	0
THE OUTDOOR SHOP	2	SOUTH YARMOUTH	535
TROY CITY TACTICAL	2	FALL RIVER	885
UNDERCOVER ARMS	2	HUDSON	0
ZERO HOUR ARMS	2	SOUTH EASTON	0
AG GUNS	1	LOWELL	22
ANTHONY'S SAFETY	1	FRAMINGHAM	281
ARCHERY AND ARMS LLC OF AUBURN	1	AUBURN	0
BOSTON GUN AND RIFLE ASSOCIATION	1	DORCHESTER	8
C&F GUNS	1	MIDDLEBOROUGH	0
CALLAGHAN'S FIREARMS SALES	1	MARLBOROUGH	0
CARR'S SPORTING GOODS INC	1	TAUNTON	0
CUSTOM DEFENSE SOLUTIONS USA	1	LITTLETON	1,031
DEAN SAFETY	1	LITTLETON	371
DGS INC	1	MARSHFIELD	43
DICK'S SPORTING GOODS #162	1	MILLBURY	0
DICK'S SPORTING GOODS #236	1	BROCKTON	0
DICK'S SPORTING GOODS #255	1	NATICK	4
DOUGLAS AUCTIONEERS	1	DEERFIELD	0
FIREARMS PROFESSIONALS INC	1	AGAWAM	0
GFA ARMS	1	NATICK	1,371
GREG DERR PRECISION ARMS	1	MARSHFIELD	77
GUN AND SPORT NORTH	1	LAWRENCE	0
GUN PARLOR	1	WORCESTER	4,506
HLA FIREARMS	1	HAVERHILL	584
HS TRADING INC	1	AUBURN	0
LAKEVILLE GUN SHOP	1	LAKEVILLE	258
LAW ENFORCEMENT EQUIPMENT INC	1	WALTHAM	744
MARCAM PRECISION	1	BRIDGEWATER	54
MASS ARMAMENT LLC	1	BELLINGHAM	1,383
MATCH SHOT-GARDNER	1	GARDNER	884
MJ ARMS LLC	1	ROCKLAND	55
NORTH SHORE FIREARMS, LLC	1	MIDDLETON	1,470
NORTON ARMS & AMMO	1	NORTON	183
OVERWATCH OUTPOST	1	CHARLEMONT	192
P&S WEAPONS	1	ROCKLAND	30
PACK AND POSTAL CENTER	1	LANCASTER	315
PAT'S GUN SHOP	1	LANESBORO	0
PHEASANT RIDGE INC	1	SEEKONK	149
R&M GUN VAULT	1	EAST LONGMEADOW	408
RICHE'S SPORTING SUPPLY	1	WESTPORT	0
SHAWSHEEN FIREARMS & GUNSMITHING	1	BILLERICA	813
SMITH & WESSON	1	SPRINGFIELD	0
THE NORWOOD ARMORY	1	NORWOOD	440
TRADITIONAL WOOD & WEAPONRY SERVICE	1	BOXBOROUGH	0
TRIPLE A GUNS, INC.	1	WEST SPRINGFIELD	0
URBAN TACTICAL SUPPLIES LLC	1	BOURNE	0
VALLEY SPORT CENTER	1	EASTHAMPTON	0
ZENKS	1	NORTHBRIDGE	0
Data Source: DCJIS			
Data reflects crime guns seized in 2020 matched against all transaction data, thus the dealer where the firearm was purchased may no longer have a Federal Firearms License			