

Recovery of Crime Guns in Massachusetts

2022



Executive Office of Public Safety and Security

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Overview

Pursuant to line item 8000-0600 of the fiscal 2018 state budget, the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security (EOPSS) has conducted an analysis under section M.G.L. c. 140, § 131Q, of the Massachusetts General Laws 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. In 2021 and 2022 the rates were 7.6% of 2,330 guns in 2021 and 7.6% of 2,419 guns in 2022. The Fusion Center received information on firearms recovered in 148 different jurisdictions in 2022, down from 153 in 2021.

Figure 1. Status of Crime Guns Reported to Commonwealth Fusion Center								
Status of Crime Gun	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Total
LOST	6	5	13	10	3	9	9	55
STOLEN	87	223	206	184	175	168	192	1,235
UNKNOWN	879	1,524	1,727	1,638	1,767	2,153	2,218	11,906
TOTAL	972	1,752	1,946	1,832	1,945	2,330	2,419	13,196

Data Source: MA Crime Gun Tracking System

Massachusetts police agencies reported 3,323 total firearms as lost or stolen to NCIC between 2016 - 2022; 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	2022	Total
Lost or Stolen Firearms	530	597	529	417	388	358	504	3,323

Data Source: NCIC

There were nineteen agencies reporting seven or more lost or stolen firearms to NCIC in 2022, up from 13 in 2021:

Figure 3. Agencies Reporting 7 or More Stolen Firearms

Jurisdiction	Total
FALL RIVER	38
FBI	37
SPRINGFIELD	20
BROCKTON	18
BOSTON	17
WESTFIELD	16
FOXBORO	15
WORCESTER	15
LYNN	14
PITTSFIELD	11
NEW BEDFORD	11
CHICOPEE	10
NATICK	10
HOLYOKE	9
SOUTHWICK	9
LEOMINSTER	9
MA STATE POLICE	9
BILLERICA	8
LEICESTER	7

Data Source: NCIC

Crime Guns Reported to the Fusion Center

A total of 2,419 gun seizures were reported to the Commonwealth Fusion Center with a seizure date of 2022. Of crime guns reported during 2022, approximately 75% were connected to an arrest. This percentage has remained consistent over the past five years never going up or down by more than 2%. While fingerprint testing is pending on many crime guns reported in 2022, 24.1% of those that have completed testing yielded fingerprint evidence. In cases where the data was available, 15.8% of crime guns reported in 2022 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 82% of recovered crime guns were listed as pistols or revolvers. The number of pistols and revolvers would be even higher if the number of ghost guns and privately made firearms that fell into these categories could be calculated. Ghost guns and privately made firearms accounted for approximately 164 firearms or 6.8 % of recovered firearms when examining the data by weapon type. When, searching other fields for common terms associated with ghost guns the number increases to 316

ghost guns or privately made firearms. This equates to approximately 13% of crime guns being ghost guns or privately made firearms.

Figure 4: Recovered Weapon Types

Weapon Type	Total
PISTOL	1,856
REVOLVER	139
RIFLE	111
GHOST GUN	89
PRIVATELY MADE FIREARM	75
SHOTGUN	73
ASSAULT RIFLE	46
OTHER	22
SHOTGUN SAWED OFF	4
STUN GUN TASER	3
MACHINE GUN	1
Total	2,419

Data Source: MA Crime Gun Tracking System

Crime Guns in MIRCS

Matching serial numbers in the Crime Gun Tracking System against MIRCS resulted in 636 records. This should not be considered 636 individual firearms, but 636 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 438 up from 352 in 2021.

Figure 5: Transaction Type for Crime Guns

Transaction Type	Total
Loss/Theft	1
Personal Sale/Transfer	116
Registration	52
Sale	467
Total	636

Data Source: DCJIS

Of the 636 matching records, 470 contained dealer information while 100 transactions contained personal information of a known seller; these numbers closely track the above transaction types. Thirty-two dealers in 29 communities had more than five transactions involving crime guns. For a complete list of dealers with transactions involving crime guns during 2022, see Appendix Table 1.

Appendix

Table 1. Dealers with Transactions Involving Crime Guns			
Dealer Name	Total Crime Gun Transactions	Town	Total 2022 Sales
FOUR SEASONS	41	WOBURN	11,631
GUNS INC.	32	WEST SPRINGFIELD	978
MASS FIREARMS SCHOOL	24	HOLLISTON	4,695
THE GUN PARLOR	20	WORCESTER	4,223
J&J ARMS LLC	13	DEDHAM	1,191
ON TARGET FIREARMS OF DRACUT	13	DRACUT	2,839
STEVES FIREARM INSTRUCTION LLC	12	STOUGHTON	1,944
CABELAS WHOLESALE LLC	11	BERLIN	1,039
DOWNRANGE INC	11	HYANNIS	5,027
OUTERLIMITS LLC	11	HOLBROOK	2,402
ARMOR BEARER SPORTS	9	SPRINGFIELD	2,203
WEBSTER LAKE SPORTING INC. DBA BOBS GUN AND ARCHERY	9	WEBSTER	1,109
BASS PRO SHOP	8	FOXBOROUGH	5,785
DECKER ENTERPRISES INC. DBA/PETES GUN SHOP	8	ADAMS	1,721
THE SPORTSMANS DEN	8	QUINCY	1,111
COLLECTOR'S COIN GALLERY	7	STONEHAM	1,169
GUNS AND GEAR LLC	7	AGAWAM	160
HUNTER'S TRADING POST, LTD.	7	WEYMOUTH	1,751
NORTHEAST ARMS LLC	7	PEABODY	1,140
POWDERHORN OUTFITTERS	7	HYANNIS	1,252
EAST MOUNTAIN WOODWORKING LLP	6	HOLYOKE	118
GFA ARMS / GREGS REPAIR SERVICE	6	NATICK	540
GUNS AND GUN PARTS	6	WEST SPRINGFIELD	411
M & M PLIMOTH BAY OUTFITTERS, INC.	6	PLYMOUTH	601
NICK'S SPORT SHOP INC.	6	PALMER	1,896
NORTHEAST TRADING CO, INC.	6	NORTH ATTLEBOROUGH	325
VILLAGE SPORTS	6	WESTPORT	1,710
HARDLINE FIREARMS LLC	5	BRIDGEWATER	150
MAGNUM ENTERPRISES, LLC	5	ORANGE	608
ON TARGET TRAINING INC	5	EAST BRIDGEWATER	1,151
PUBLIC SAFETY ARMORY LLC	5	REHOBETH	250
SHOOTING SUPPLY	5	WESTPORT	2,301
LAW ENFORCEMENT EQUIPMENT INC	4	WALTHAM	339
NORTH SHORE FIREARMS, LLC	4	MIDDLETON	1,376
PIONEER VALLEY ARMS	4	EAST LONGMEADOW	2,664
THE GUN RACK	4	TURNERS FALLS	3,431
ZERO HOUR ARMS	4	SOUTH EASTON	0
AJS FIREARMS	3	ACUSHNET	0
BLUE NORTHERN TRADING COMPANY	3	AYER	0
CULVERINE FIREARMS	3	FEEDING HILLS	1,164
J&S GUNS AND AMMO	3	ACUSHNET	708
R & R GUN SALES	3	BELCHERTOWN	1,398
THE GUNRUNNER LLC	3	MIDDLEBOROUGH	846
TOMBSTONE TRADING COMPANY	3	BROOKFIELD	1,530
TROY CITY TACTICAL	3	FALL RIVER	571
WAYNE'S WEAPONRY	3	WEST BOYLSTON	0
AVID SPORTS	2	PITTSFIELD	1,156
B&K SALES, LLC	2	NATICK	543
BAYSTATE FIREARMS TRAINING OF PEABODY	2	PEABODY	0
BRON CLASSIC FIREARMS	2	STURBRIDGE	63
DAVE'S SPORTING GOODS	2	PITTSFIELD	807
DICK'S SPORTING GOODS #035	2	WEST SPRINGFIELD	0
DOWN RANGE SPORTS	2	BARRE	747
FAIRHAVEN FIREARMS	2	FAIRHAVEN	445
FIRST DEFENSE FIREARMS	2	UXBRIDGE	400
GARTMAN ARMS CO INC	2	WRENTHAM	1,300
GRRR GEAR INC	2	ORANGE	0
MINUTEMAN ARMORY	2	TEMPLETON	0
NEW ENGLAND BALLISTIC SERVICES INC	2	HOPEDALE	498
PARADIS FIREARM REPAIR	2	NORTH BROOKFIELD	905
R&M GUN VAULT	2	EAST LONGMEADOW	493
RON'S GUN SHOP	2	DRACUT	0

Table 1. Dealers with Transactions Involving Crime Guns			
Dealer Name	Total Crime Gun Transactions	Town	Total 2022 Sales
THE ORIGINAL BOBS SHOOTING RANGE AND GUN SHOP	2	SALISBURY	0
THE OUTDOOR SHOP	2	SOUTH YARMOUTH	220
TRIPLE A GUNS, INC.	2	WEST SPRINGFIELD	0
VILLAGE GUN SHOP	2	NORTHBOROUGH	0
AC ARMS	1	MENDON	343
ARCHER ARMS	1	CARVER	0
ARMOUR SPORTS INC	1	TAUNTON	773
ATLANTIC TACTICAL	1	WESTWOOD	1,307
AUTO-SPORT DISTRIBUTORS	1	AGAWAM	0
B.G. SPORTING INC	1	WESTFIELD	501
BACHANT ARMAMENTS CORP	1	LAKEVILLE	646
BOSTON GUN AND RIFLE ASSOCIATION	1	DORCHESTER	0
BROPHYS FINE FIREARMS	1	MIDDLEBOROUGH	675
C&F GUNS	1	MIDDLEBOROUGH	0
COLLECTOR'S FIREARMS AND MILITARIA	1	CHELMSFORD	0
COMMONWEALTH FIREARMS & TRAINING CENTER, LTD	1	SOMERSET	0
CUSTOM DEFENSE SOLUTIONS USA	1	LITTLETON	1,001
DEFENSIVE DYNAMICS LLC	1	LITTLETON	1,468
DICK'S SPORTING GOODS #175	1	PLYMOUTH	0
DICK'S SPORTING GOODS #176	1	HADLEY	0
DICK'S SPORTING GOODS #237	1	DARTMOUTH	0
DOUGLAS AUCTIONEERS	1	DEERFIELD	0
F.B. KRAUSE AND SONS	1	HINGHAM	18
FAIRGROUND TRADERS INC.	1	BROCKTON	0
FAT CAT SPORTS	1	BRIDGEWATER	260
FLINT ARMAMENT, INC	1	FALL RIVER	0
GUN AND SPORT NORTH EXCHANGE LLC	1	METHUEN	39
GUN ROOM OF SHREWSBURY INC	1	SHREWSBURY	0
H&H ARMS	1	CLINTON	17
HLA FIREARMS	1	HAVERHILL	429
IRON SKULL TACTICAL, LLC	1	LITTLETON	63
K & R TARGET SPORTS	1	HUDSON	0
KAG ARMS	1	LITTLETON	449
LEGAL ARMS CO	1	LITTLETON	35
MATCH SHOT-GARDNER	1	GARDNER	588
MICRO ARC WELDING INC	1	WORCESTER	128
MIDDLEBORO GUN SHOP	1	MIDDLEBOROUGH	168
MIKE'S GUN SHOP	1	NORTHBRIDGE	0
MILLERS FALLS GUN SHACK	1	MONTAGUE	0
MINUTE MAN SPORTSMANS CLUB	1	BILLERICA	28
MINUTEMAN ARMAMENT	1	LITTLETON	226
NORTHERN ATLANTIC ENTERPRISES LLC	1	REHOBETH	550
OLD MILL GUN SHOP	1	LEOMINSTER	0
PATHFINDER FIREARMS	1	LITTLETON	24
POWDER HOUSE ARMS AND INSTRUCTION LLC	1	BRIDGEWATER	44
PRECISION POINT FIREARMS OF WOBURN	1	WOBURN	883
RAMSLAND ARMS	1	BRIMFIELD	0
RIVERS EDGE TRADING COMPANY	1	BEVERLY	0
RON'S SPORT SHOP	1	DARTMOUTH	122
SPARKY'S GUN SHOP	1	WEBSTER	0
STONEY ACRE SPORTS	1	SUTTON	387
STRICKLAND & SON'S	1	BERKLEY	1
THE NORWOOD ARMORY	1	NORWOOD	328
TITE GROUP SPORTING	1	NORTHBOROUGH	0
WICKED WEAPONRY	1	CONCORD	0

Data Source: DCJIS

Data reflects crime guns seized in 2022 matched against all transaction data, thus the dealer where the firearm was purchased may no longer have a Federal Firearms License.