

STOLEN GUNS POSE A TREMENDOUS RISK TO PUBLIC SAFETY

Gun thefts occur in staggering numbers. Hundreds of thousands of guns are stolen every year, taken from houses, vehicles, and stores. Gun thefts often divert guns into an underground market where people with dangerous histories are easily able to obtain firearms without restriction. That is why stolen guns are often recovered at crime scenes, including at the scenes of homicides and other violent crimes. Policymakers can pass laws that can help prevent gun thefts and can also work with gun owners and dealers to help ensure that their guns do not end up in the hands of people who should not have them.

GUNS STOLEN EACH YEAR FROM...

PRIVATE GUN OWNERS

380,000 guns

GUN DEALERS

18,700 guns

SHIPPING COMPANIES

1,300 guns

GUN OWNERS WERE **3X** MORE LIKELY TO HAVE A GUN STOLEN IF THEY CARRIED A GUN IN THE LAST MONTH.

Hundreds of thousands of guns are stolen each year, the vast majority of which are stolen from private gun owners.

- Estimates from various sources suggest that between 200,000 and 500,000 guns are stolen from individuals each year.¹ The most recent nationally representative survey found that approximately 380,000 guns are stolen from private gun owners every year.²
- Gun owners were three times more likely to have a gun stolen if they carried a gun in the last month compared to gun owners who did not carry.³
- Research suggests that nearly one-quarter of stolen guns are taken from cars and other vehicles.^{4,5}
- In addition to theft from private owners, approximately 18,700 firearms are reported lost or stolen from licensed gun dealers each year, according to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF).⁶
- Although there are nearly 62,000 licensed gun dealers throughout the U.S.,⁷ nearly 3,000 of the guns reported lost or stolen in 2017 were taken from just 10 dealers.⁸
- Another investigation revealed that about 1,300 guns taken from gun dealers each year may have been stolen from or lost by shipping companies while in transit from gun manufacturers to the gun dealers.⁹

The number of guns stolen each year has steadily increased over at least the last decade.

- The number of guns reported stolen from individuals increased by nearly 60 percent between 2006 and 2016.¹⁰

**THE NUMBER
OF GUNS
STOLEN FROM
CARS INCREASED
BY 2X BETWEEN
2006 AND 2015.**

- The number of guns stolen from cars nearly doubled between 2006 and 2015, with several cities experiencing more than threefold increases.¹¹
- The number of gun thefts from licensed gun dealers has increased more than the number from any other source. Between 2013 and 2017, the number of firearms stolen in gun-dealer burglaries more than doubled and the number of firearms stolen in gun-dealer robberies tripled.¹²

In Anchorage, AK, two people smashed the glass door of a licensed gun dealer, emptied a glass display case of guns, and left with 36 firearms in a duffel bag. Later that weekend, one of the guns was used in a fatal shooting of a 65-year-old man.¹³

Stolen guns undermine the enforcement of our gun laws and often end up in the possession of someone who was legally prohibited from having guns.

- The ATF reports that nearly 60,000 guns are trafficked across state lines each year,¹⁴ the vast majority of which flow from states with weaker guns laws to states with tougher laws.¹⁵
- Research suggests that individuals who are prohibited from possessing guns may utilize the underground market to obtain guns and that a large percentage of the transactions that arm these offenders are illegal under current law.¹⁶

Research suggests that stolen guns are linked to crime — in fact, many guns found at crime scenes can be traced through the underground market.

- The majority of the 23,000 stolen firearms recovered by police between 2010 and 2016 were recovered in connection with crimes, including more than 1,500 violent acts.¹⁷

In 2016, a gun stolen from a former law-enforcement officer was used in a shoot-out wounding three Chicago, IL, police officers in the line of duty. The gunman had a felony record and was prohibited from possessing firearms.¹⁸

As reported by *The Trace*, an AK-47-style rifle was stolen from a house during a break-in in Atlanta, GA, in 2015. The following year, a gunman with a felony history used the weapon to shoot and injure two men at a Chevron gas station. Two months later, the felon used the rifle to fatally shoot his girlfriend's neighbor.¹⁹

- A study of crime scenes in Pittsburgh, PA, found that more than 30 percent of the guns that ended up at crime scenes had been stolen.²⁰
- In recent years, guns stolen from vehicles have often shown up at violent crime scenes:

The firearm used to kill a Florida police officer in 2014 had been stolen from an unlocked Honda Accord four months before.²¹

A gun stolen from a St. Louis, MO, woman who had driven around with it in a plastic bag later turned up at the scene of a homicide.²²

**THE ATF REPORTS
THAT NEARLY 60,000
GUNS ARE TRAFFICKED
ACROSS STATE LINES
EACH YEAR.**

THERE ARE A NUMBER OF COMMON-SENSE STEPS LEGISLATORS CAN TAKE TO PREVENT GUN THEFTS

Require Responsible Gun Storage

Gun owners are significantly less likely to have a gun stolen if they store all of their guns locked and unloaded,²³ yet more than half of gun owners do not store all of their guns responsibly.²⁴

- Lawmakers can pass laws to require that gun owners responsibly store their firearms that are left unattended.

Promote Public Awareness of Responsible Storage

Policymakers, community members, and gun owners have a responsibility to build public awareness about responsible storage practices.

- Lawmakers, community members, and local leaders can promote public awareness campaigns — such as the Be SMART program²⁵ — that encourage responsible gun storage and highlight the public safety risks of unsecured guns to help prevent unauthorized access.²⁶

Require That Concealed Handgun Permit Training Programs Train People on Responsible Storage at Home and in Vehicles

Nearly 9 million adult handgun owners carry their handguns in public at least once a month; 3 million carry in public every day.²⁷ According to one study, encouraging or requiring gun owners to take safety courses that focus specifically on best practices for gun storage could improve responsible storage.²⁸

- Legislators can mandate that any required firearm-safety training course for a handgun-carry permit also covers responsible firearm storage and the threat of stolen guns.
- Legislators can require a permit to carry a loaded handgun in a vehicle to ensure that gun owners take firearm safety training and are aware of responsible storage practices. This crucial step could help encourage responsible gun storage in vehicles.

Rethink Guns in Parking Lot Laws

Many states have laws forcing private business owners or employers to allow guns to be stored in vehicles in their parking lots, even though local conditions may make these cars attractive targets for thieves.

- Lawmakers can review these laws to assess the potential threats to safety posed by guns stolen from vehicles.

Require Gun Owners to Report Lost and Stolen Firearms

Reporting lost or stolen guns to local law enforcement may reduce underground gun sales and illegal gun trafficking. One study found that mandatory-reporting laws for lost and stolen guns were associated with a 30 percent lower risk that guns would be purchased in that state and recovered after a crime in another state.²⁹

- Lawmakers can pass laws to affirmatively require gun owners to report stolen firearms to law enforcement for investigation immediately when they go missing.

Adopt Strong Firearm-Dealer Regulations and Hold Dealers Accountable

Research shows that strong gun-dealer regulations are associated with decreased gun trafficking. One study found that intrastate gun trafficking was four times higher in cities located in states with weak gun-dealer regulations than in cities in states with strong regulations.³⁰

- Lawmakers can pass laws that require gun dealers to obtain a state or local dealer license, implement minimum physical security measures, make their records and premises available to law enforcement for inspections, and report lost and stolen firearms from their inventory to law enforcement.
- Given that a large proportion of stolen guns are traced back to a small number of gun dealers, lawmakers should hold those dealers accountable. Lawmakers can ensure that licensing laws include strong compliance mechanisms and penalties that target repeat offenders.

1. The exact number of firearms stolen is difficult to determine because many stolen guns are not reported to law enforcement. Estimates included in this range are derived from the following sources: Langton L. Firearms stolen during household burglaries and other property crimes, 2005–2010. US Department of Justice. 2012. <https://bit.ly/2D9ujOd>; US Department of Justice 2012 Summary: Firearms Reported Lost and Stolen. <https://bit.ly/2D5qVnM>; Cook PJ, Ludwig J. Guns in America: Results of a Comprehensive National Survey of Firearms Ownership and Use. Washington DC: Police Foundation; 1996.
2. Hemenway D, Azrael D, Miller M. Whose guns are stolen? The epidemiology of gun theft victims. *Injury Epidemiology*. 2017; 4(1): 11.
3. Ibid.
4. Stolzenberg L, D'Alessio SJ. Gun availability and violent crime: New evidence from the National Incident-Based Reporting System. *Social Forces*. 2000; 78(4): 1461-1482.
5. Everytown analyzed data obtained by *The Trace* from 1,054 law enforcement agencies in 36 states and Washington, DC. For the yearly comparison, Everytown narrowed the analysis of local data obtained by *The Trace* to 39 cities in 16 states based on the availability of data for all years between 2006 and 2015. <https://bit.ly/2UmQhUX>.
6. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives. Data & Statistics: Federal Firearms Licensee Statistics Theft / Loss Reports. Data represent a five year average of most recent available data: 2013 to 2017. <https://bit.ly/2nigapL>. Published 2017.
7. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives. Data & Statistics: Listing of Federal Firearms Licensees (FFLs). <https://bit.ly/2nigapL>. As of November 2018, ATF reported there were 63, 543 Type 1 and 2 licensed gun dealers in the U.S. Analyses were done to determine the latitude and longitude of each licensed dealer and duplicates by latitude, longitude, and state were removed for a total of 61,763 unique licensed gun dealers.
8. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives. Data & Statistics: Federal Firearms Licensee Statistics Theft / Loss Reports. <https://bit.ly/2tyE0Sa>. Published 2019.
9. Freskos B. Guns stolen from UPS and other shipping companies are turning up at crime scenes. *The Trace*. February 8, 2018. <https://bit.ly/2B78QFq>. A yearly average was developed using five years of data: 2010 to 2014. Law enforcement recovered more than 6,600 crime guns that traced back to dealers who claimed to have never received them.
10. Federal Bureau of Investigation. The National Crime Information Center (NCIC) Gun File data by State. Everytown obtained data from the NCIC by *The Trace*. From 2007 to 2016, the number of stolen firearms reported increased from 149,423 to 238,452.
11. Everytown analyzed data obtained by *The Trace* from 1,054 law enforcement agencies in 36 states and Washington, DC. For the yearly comparison, Everytown narrowed the analysis of local data obtained by *The Trace* to 39 cities in 16 states based on the availability of data for all years between 2006 and 2015. <https://bit.ly/2UmQhUX>. From 2006 to 2015, the number of firearms stolen from cars reported in these 39 cities increased from 3,066 to 5,426. The following cities experienced increases of at least 200 percent between 2006 and 2015: Mesquite, TX, Overland Park, KS, Wichita, KS, Milwaukee, WI, Fort Collins, CO, Raleigh, NC, and Chicago IL.
12. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives. Data and Statistics: Federal Firearms Licensee Burglary and Robbery Statistics. <https://bit.ly/2nigapL>. Estimates developed using five years of most recent available data: 2013 to 2017. 2018. From 2013 to 2017, the number of firearms stolen in gun dealer burglaries increased from 3,355 to 7,841. Over the same time period, the number of firearms stolen in gun dealer robberies increased from 96 to 288.
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