



NEW MEXICO FIREARMS TRAFFICKING AND CRIME GUN FACT SHEET

New Mexico is facing a crime gun crisis—and the evidence points squarely at the state's own federally licensed gun dealers. In 2023 alone, law enforcement recovered and traced 4,847 crime guns across New Mexico. Of those, 78 percent (3,766) were originally purchased through Federal Firearms Licensees (FFLs). Even more troubling, more than three-quarters of those guns—2,905 firearms—were sold by FFLs operating within New Mexico.¹

Many New Mexico crime guns show indicia of trafficking. Approximately 47 percent of all crime guns recovered in New Mexico were purchased less than three years before their recovery—a key red flag for illegal trafficking.² Additionally, between 2017 and 2021, more than 89 percent of crime guns were recovered in the possession of someone other than the purchaser, another significant indication of firearm trafficking. Based on this data, it is estimated that 1,565 crime guns recovered in New Mexico in 2023 were likely funneled from FFLs to obvious traffickers and ultimately to violent criminals.

According to the ATF trafficking investigations studied in the National Firearms Commerce and Trafficking Assessment (NFCTA), nearly 90 percent of trafficking cases involve a possessor that is prohibited from legally possessing a firearm. Additionally, possessors or recipients of trafficked guns tend to be convicted felons (60 percent), known gang members (29 percent), or drug users or drug traffickers (22 percent).³ Trafficked firearms are more likely to be used in violent crimes.

Despite there being roughly 670 active FFLs in New Mexico, it is estimated that just 115 are actively selling firearms.⁴ Further, based on crime gun recoveries between 2017 and

¹ ATF, “Firearms Trace Data 2023,” December 2024, <https://www.atf.gov/resource-center/firearms-trace-data-2023>. See Firearm Types Recovered and Traced in the United States and Territories and Time-to-Crime - Firearms Sourced and Recovered in the United States and Territories.

² ATF, “Firearms Trace Data: New Mexico - 2023,” December 2024, <https://www.atf.gov/resource-center/firearms-trace-data-new-mexico-2023>. See Time-To-Crime Rates for Firearms with a New Mexico Recovery.

³ ATF, “National Firearms Commerce and Trafficking Assessment (NFCTA), Volume III: Firearms Trafficking Investigations—Part VI: Characteristics of Firearm Traffickers, End Users, and Defendants,” April 2024, 1, <https://www.atf.gov/firearms/docs/report/nfcta-volume-iii-part-vi/download>. See table CFT-25a.

⁴ According to NFCTA research, actual sales are concentrated among a small subset of this overall group of licensees: just 15 percent of gun dealers account for 90 percent of all retail gun sales, 38 percent of pawnbrokers are responsible for 91 percent of pawnshop sales, and 17 percent of manufacturers are responsible for 96 percent of retail sales conducted by manufacturers. ATF, “National Firearms Commerce and Trafficking Assessment (NFCTA), Volume I: Firearms in Commerce,” May 2022, 67–68, <https://www.atf.gov/firearms/docs/report/national-firearms-commerce-and-trafficking-assessment-firearms-commerce->

2021, nearly 63% of all New Mexico crime guns were recovered within 50 miles of the FFL they were purchased from.⁵ In other words, stop a few FFLs, and you can make a huge impact on violent gun crime.

This isn't an abstract national issue—it's a local supply chain problem. And without meaningful action, it will continue to fuel violence in New Mexico communities.

TRACED CRIME GUNS BY TYPE

In 2023, 4,847 crime guns were recovered in New Mexico and subsequently traced. New Mexico ranked 29th in the U.S. for most traces of crime guns recovered in 2023, but when considering population, New Mexico had the 5th most traces per 100,000 people.⁶

Type ⁷	Recovered and Traced	Percentage of Total
Pistols	3,161	65%
Rifles	710	15%
Revolvers	417	9%
Shotguns	336	7%
Receivers/Frames	100	2%
Machineguns/Machinegun Conversion Devices	82	2%

TOP FIVE SOURCE STATES FOR CRIME GUNS RECOVERED IN NEW MEXICO⁸

New Mexico FFLs supply 77 percent of all crime guns recovered in the state.⁹ The state is its own source of crime guns, making it a viable target for trafficking reduction strategies aimed at local dealers.

[volume/download](#). See Tables SD-03: "Total Type 01 FFLs and EMSV by EMSV Range, 2017–2020;" SD-04: "Type 02 FFLs and EMSV Range, 2017–2020"; and SD-05: "Type 07 FFLs and EMSV Range, 2017–2020."

⁵ ATF, "National Firearms Commerce and Trafficking Assessment (NFCTA), New Mexico State Report," November 2023, <https://www.atf.gov/firearms/docs/report/new-mexico-state-report/download>. See Crime Guns Sourced From This State, 2017 - 2021.

⁶ Everytown analysis of ATF Firearms Trace Data 2023 and Census Population Data 2023.

⁷ ATF, "Firearms Trace Data: New Mexico - 2023," December 2024, <https://www.atf.gov/resource-center/firearms-trace-data-new-mexico-2023>. See "Firearm Types with a New Mexico Recovery."

⁸ Source State known in 3,766 traces.

⁹ ATF, "Firearms Trace Data: New Mexico - 2023," December 2024, <https://www.atf.gov/resource-center/firearms-trace-data-new-mexico-2023>. See "Top 15 Source States for Firearms with a New Mexico Recovery, 2023."

State	Number of Crime Guns Traced	Percent of Traces
New Mexico	2,905	77%
Texas	254	7%
Arizona	111	3%
Colorado	77	2%
California	30	Less than 1%

TIME-TO-CRIME OF TRACED FIREARMS RECOVERED IN NEW MEXICO¹⁰

Forty-seven percent (1,769) of all crime guns were purchased less than three years prior to recovery in a crime. The rapid movement from purchase to use in a crime strongly indicates New Mexico has a significant trafficking problem.

TTC ¹¹	Number of Traces	Percentage of Traces
Less Than 1 Year	804	21%
Less Than 3 Years	1,759	47%

FEDERAL FIREARMS LICENSEES IN NEW MEXICO¹²

Currently, there are 673 active FFLs in New Mexico; however, based on NFCTA research, just 15 percent of retail dealers, 38 percent of pawnbrokers, and about 17 percent of manufacturers account for 90 percent of all firearm sales. Based on this information, there are about 115 FFLs actively selling firearms, providing a more manageable number for oversight.¹³

¹⁰ TTC known in 3,747 traces.

¹¹ ATF, “Firearms Trace Data: New Mexico - 2023,” December 2024, <https://www.atf.gov/resource-center/firearms-trace-data-new-mexico-2023>. See Firearm Types with a New Mexico Recovery. See Time-To-Crime Rates for Firearms with a New Mexico Recovery.

¹² ATF, State Federal Firearms Listings, August 2025, New Mexico, https://www.atf.gov/firearms/listing-federal-firearms-licensees/state?field_ffl_date_value%5Bvalue%5D%5Byear%5D=2025&field_ffl_date_month%5Bvalue%5D%5Bmonth%5D=8&field_state_value=NM.

¹³ ATF, “National Firearms Commerce and Trafficking Assessment (NFCTA), Volume I: Firearms in Commerce—Part V: Selling and Distribution,” May 2022, <https://www.atf.gov/firearms/docs/report/national-firearms-commerce-and-trafficking-assessment-firearms-commerce-volume/download>. NFCTA Volume I, Part V, See tables SD-03, 04, and 05.

Type of FFL	Number of Active FFLs	Percentage of FFLs
Type 01 - Dealer	412	61%
Type 02 - Pawnbroker	45	7%
Type 07 - Manufacturer	210	31%
Type 08 - Importer	6	Less than 1%

METHOD OF FIREARM TRAFFICKING

According to ATF Phoenix Field Division, which covers New Mexico, of trafficking investigations conducted between 2017 and 2021, 475 cases involved unlicensed dealing and 465 involved straw purchasing.¹⁴ Nationally, nearly 24 percent of ATF trafficking cases involving straw purchasing were linked to at least one shooting, and 16 percent of unlicensed dealing cases were linked to at least one shooting.¹⁵ FFL oversight and accountability are critical in reducing firearm trafficking driven by unlicensed sellers and straw purchasers.

Method of Trafficking	Number of Cases	Percentage of Total Cases
Unlicensed Dealing	475	47%
Straw Purchasing	465	46%
FFL Theft	58	6%
Private Party Theft	16	2%

ADDITIONAL CRIME DATA 2017-2021¹⁶

Between 2017 and 2021, nearly 16,000 crime guns were recovered in New Mexico and traced by law enforcement, of which more than 78 percent were traced to a purchase from a New Mexico FFL. Further, more than 48 percent of these crime guns were purchased less than three years prior to recovery, and only 11 percent were recovered in the possession of the purchaser. These statistics further highlight the fact that New

¹⁴ ATF, “National Firearms Commerce and Trafficking Assessment (NFCTA), Volume III: Firearms Trafficking Investigations—Part III: Firearm Trafficking Channels and Methods Used,” April 2024, 2, <https://www.atf.gov/firearms/docs/report/nfcta-volume-iii-part-iii/download>. See Appendix FTC-05. The cases encompass the ATF Phoenix Field Division which oversees Arizona and New Mexico.

¹⁵ ATF, “National Firearms Commerce and Trafficking Assessment (NFCTA), Volume III: Firearms Trafficking Investigations—Part IX: Investigation Outcomes,” April 2024, 2, <https://www.atf.gov/firearms/docs/report/nfcta-volume-iii-part-ix/download>. See Table IO-06.

¹⁶ ATF, “National Firearms Commerce and Trafficking Assessment (NFCTA), New Mexico State Report,” November 2023, <https://www.atf.gov/firearms/docs/report/new-mexico-state-report/download>. See page 3.

Mexico's violent gun crime is fueled by traffickers who obtain their crime guns from local FFLs.

Total Crime Guns Recovered and Traced	15,923
Total Traced to a Purchaser from an FFL	12,480
Total Traced to a New Mexico FFL	9,744

DISTANCE BETWEEN FFL PURCHASE LOCATION AND CRIME GUN RECOVERY LOCATION

Approximately 56% (5,507) of all New Mexico crime guns were recovered within 10 miles of the FFL they were purchased from.¹⁷ Nearly 48 percent (7,568) of crime guns were recovered in Albuquerque; the 130 FFLs operating in Albuquerque are the suppliers of the majority of crime guns used to terrorize the city.

Distance in Miles¹⁸	Number of Crime Guns Recovered and Traced	Percentage of Total Traces
0-10	5,507	56%
11-25	764	8%
26-50	365	4%
51-100	602	6%
101-200	667	7%
201-300	407	4%
More than 300	1,608	16%

SHOOTINGS AND NIBIN LEADS

According to NFCTA research of ATF firearm trafficking investigations, approximately 15 percent of trafficked firearms are used in shootings.¹⁹ In order to disrupt those who pull

¹⁷ ATF, "National Firearms Commerce and Trafficking Assessment (NFCTA), New Mexico State Report," November 2023, <https://www.atf.gov/firearms/docs/report/new-mexico-state-report/download>. See Crime Guns Recovered and Traced, 2017-2021.

¹⁸ ATF, "National Firearms Commerce and Trafficking Assessment (NFCTA), New Mexico State Report," November 2023, <https://www.atf.gov/firearms/docs/report/new-mexico-state-report/download>. See Crime Guns Sourced From This State, 2017 - 2021.

¹⁹ ATF, "National Firearms Commerce and Trafficking Assessment (NFCTA), Volume III: Firearms Trafficking Investigations—Part IX: Investigation Outcomes," April 2024, 5, <https://www.atf.gov/firearms/docs/report/nfcta-volume-iii-part-ix/download>.

the trigger, you must stop the traffickers and their FFL suppliers. The median time-to-first-shooting of just 1.5 years for recovered pistols in New Mexico indicates the perpetrators were likely armed by traffickers.²⁰

Total Casings and Test Fires Entered into NIBIN	18,351
NIBIN Leads	4,602
NIBIN Lead Rate	25%
Total Pistols Recovered and Test Fired	7,390
Pistols with NIBIN Leads	703
Lead Rate from Pistol Test Fires	10%
Median Time-to-First-Shooting (TTFS)	1.5 years

²⁰ ATF, “National Firearms Commerce and Trafficking Assessment (NFCTA), New Mexico State Report,” November 2023, <https://www.atf.gov/firearms/docs/report/new-mexico-state-report/download>. See page 6.