



MICHIGAN FIREARMS TRAFFICKING AND CRIME GUN FACT SHEET

Michigan 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 11,460 crime guns across Michigan. Of those, 81 percent (9,305) were originally purchased through Federal Firearms Licensees (FFLs). Even more troubling, nearly three-quarters of those guns—7,370 firearms—were sold by FFLs operating within Michigan.¹

Many Michigan crime guns show indicia of trafficking. Approximately 52 percent of all crime guns recovered in Michigan were purchased less than three years before their recovery—a key red flag for illegal trafficking.² Additionally, between 2017 and 2021, nearly 80 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 3,800 crime guns recovered in Michigan 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 2,300 active FFLs in Michigan, it is estimated just 372 FFLs are actively selling firearms,⁴ and 22 FFLs are likely responsible for 1 out of every 4

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: Michigan - 2023,” December 2024, <https://www.atf.gov/resource-center/firearms-trace-data-michigan-2023>. See Time-To-Crime Rates for Firearms with a Michigan 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->

crime guns recovered in Michigan. 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 Michigan communities.

TRACED CRIME GUNS BY TYPE

In 2023, 11,460 crime guns were recovered in Michigan and subsequently traced. Michigan ranked 15th in the U.S. for most traces of crime guns recovered in 2023.⁵

Type ⁶	Recovered and Traced	Percentage of Total
Pistols	8,564	75%
Rifles	1,291	11%
Revolvers	726	6%
Shotguns	535	5%
Machinegun Conversion Devices	219	2%

TOP FIVE SOURCE STATES FOR CRIME GUNS RECOVERED IN MICHIGAN⁷

Michigan FFLs supply 79% of all crime guns recovered in the state.⁸ 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 Everytown analysis of ATF Firearms Trace Data 2023.

⁶ ATF, "Firearms Trace Data: Michigan - 2023," December 2024, <https://www.atf.gov/resource-center/firearms-trace-data-michigan-2023>. See "Firearm Types with a Michigan Recovery."

⁷ Source State known in 9,305 traces. ATF, "Firearms Trace Data: Michigan - 2023," December 2024, <https://www.atf.gov/resource-center/firearms-trace-data-michigan-2023>.

⁸ ATF, "Firearms Trace Data: Michigan - 2023," December 2024, <https://www.atf.gov/resource-center/firearms-trace-data-michigan-2023>. See "Top 15 Source States for Firearms with a Michigan Recovery, 2023."

State	Number of Crime Guns Traced	Percentage of Traces
Michigan	7,370	79%
Ohio	288	3%
Indiana	183	2%
Kentucky	163	2%
Tennessee	154	2%

TIME-TO-CRIME OF TRACED FIREARMS RECOVERED IN MICHIGAN⁹

Fifty-two percent (4,786) 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 Michigan has a significant trafficking problem.

TTC ¹⁰	Number of Traces	Percentage of Traces
Less Than 1 Year	1,759	19%
Less Than 3 Years	4,786	52%

FEDERAL FIREARMS LICENSEES IN MICHIGAN¹¹

Currently, there are 2,344 active FFLs in Michigan;¹² 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 372 FFLs actively selling firearms, providing a more manageable number for oversight.¹³

⁹ TTC known in 9,290 traces. ATF, "Firearms Trace Data: Michigan - 2023," December 2024, <https://www.atf.gov/resource-center/firearms-trace-data-michigan-2023>.

¹⁰ ATF, "Firearms Trace Data: Michigan - 2023," December 2024, <https://www.atf.gov/resource-center/firearms-trace-data-michigan-2023>. See Firearm Types with a Michigan Recovery. See Time-To-Crime Rates for Firearms with a Michigan Recovery.

¹¹ ATF, State Federal Firearms Listings, September 2025, Michigan https://www.atf.gov/firearms/listing-federal-firearms-licensees/state?field_ffl_date_value%5Bvalue%5D%5Byear%5D=2025&ffl_date_month%5Bvalue%5D%5Bmonth%5D=9&field_state_value=MI.

¹² ATF, "State Federal Firearms Listings," September 2025, <https://www.atf.gov/firearms/listing-federal-firearms-licensees/>. Includes Type 01, Type 02, and Type 07 FFLs.

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	1,673	83%
Type 02 - Pawnbroker	67	4%
Type 07 - Manufacturer	563	12%
Type 08 - Importer	41	1%

METHOD OF FIREARM TRAFFICKING

According to ATF trafficking investigations between 2017 and 2021 conducted in the ATF Detroit Field Division, which covers the entire state, the top three methods of trafficking involved theft from an FFL, straw purchasing, and unlicensed dealing.¹⁴ Nationally, nearly 24 percent of straw purchasing trafficking cases, 16 percent of unlicensed dealing, and nearly 7 percent of FFL theft trafficking cases were linked to at least one shooting.¹⁵ Between 2017 and 2021, Michigan saw the 10th most intrastate trafficking investigations (139) initiated by the ATF.¹⁶

FFL oversight and accountability are critical in reducing firearm trafficking and gun violence.

Method of Trafficking	Number of Cases	Percentage of Total Cases
FFL Theft	61	34%
Unlicensed Dealing	49	28%
Straw Purchasing	43	24%
Private Party Theft	25	14%

ADDITIONAL DATA ON CRIME GUN RECOVERIES BETWEEN 2017-2021¹⁷

¹⁴ The cases encompass the entire ATF Detroit Field Division, which encompasses the state of Michigan. Data is from the NFCTA Volume III, Part III, Appendix FTC-05.

¹⁵ 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>. See Table IO-06.

¹⁶ ATF, "National Firearms Commerce and Trafficking Assessment (NFCTA), Volume III: Firearms Trafficking Investigations—Part IV: Source-to-Market Type," April 2024, 2, <https://www.atf.gov/firearms/docs/report/nfcta-volume-iii-part-iv/download>. See Table STM-07.

¹⁷ ATF, "National Firearms Commerce and Trafficking Assessment (NFCTA), Michigan State Report," November 2023, <https://www.atf.gov/firearms/docs/report/michigan-state-report/download>. See page 3.

Between 2017 and 2021, more than 43,000 crime guns were recovered in Michigan and traced by law enforcement, of which more than 81 percent were traced to a purchase from an FFL. Further, more than 78 percent of these crime guns were purchased from FFLs operating within Michigan. During this time, more than 54 percent of these crime guns were purchased less than three years prior to recovery, and less than 20 percent were recovered in the possession of the purchaser. These statistics further highlight the fact that Michigan's violent gun crime is fueled by traffickers who obtain their crime guns from local FFLs.

Total Crime Guns Recovered and Traced	43,599
Total Traced to a Purchaser from an FFL	35,443
Total Traced to a Purchase at a MI FFL	27,780

TOP SOURCE CITIES FOR CRIME GUNS

Between 2017 and 2021, it is likely that 22 FFLs operating in four cities in Michigan were the source of more than 25 percent of all crime guns purchased and recovered in Michigan. These same FFLs are still selling guns in 2025.

City	Number of Crime Guns Recovered and Traced¹⁸	Number of FFLs Active Between '17—'21 and Still Operational
Southfield	2,361	6
Eastpointe	2,033	4
Warren	1,580	7
Taylor	1,329	5

DISTANCE BETWEEN FFL PURCHASE LOCATION AND CRIME GUN RECOVERY LOCATION

More than 65 percent of all crime guns were recovered within 25 miles of the FFL they were purchased from.¹⁹ To reduce gun violence you must identify and investigate the FFLs located in the areas with the most crime gun recoveries. More than 61% of all Michigan crime guns were recovered in Detroit.

¹⁸ ATF, "National Firearms Commerce and Trafficking Assessment (NFCTA), Michigan State Report," November 2023, <https://www.atf.gov/firearms/docs/report/michigan-state-report/download>. See page 3.

¹⁹ ATF, "National Firearms Commerce and Trafficking Assessment (NFCTA), Michigan State Report," November 2023, <https://www.atf.gov/firearms/docs/report/michigan-state-report/download>. See Crime Guns Recovered and Traced, 2017-2021.

Distance in Miles	Number of Crime Guns Recovered and Traced	Percentage of Total Traces
0-10	12,003	41%
11-25	6,970	24%
26-50	1,670	6%
51-100	1,743	6%
101-200	1,501	5%
201-300	1,176	4%
More than 300	4,398	15%

SHOOTINGS AND NIBIN LEADS

According to NFCTA research of ATF firearm trafficking investigations, approximately 15 percent of trafficked firearms are used in shootings.²⁰ In order to disrupt those who pull the trigger, you must stop the traffickers and the FFL suppliers. The median time-to-first-shooting of just two years for recovered pistols in Michigan indicates the perpetrators were likely armed by traffickers.²¹

Total Casings and Test Fires Entered into NIBIN	73,027
NIBIN Leads	15,369
NIBIN Lead Rate	21%
Total Pistols Recovered and Test Fired	41,987
Pistols with NIBIN Leads	3,331
Lead Rate from Pistol Test Fires	8%
Median Time-to-First-Shooting (TTFS)	2 Years

²⁰ ATF, "National Firearms Commerce and Trafficking Assessment (NFCTA), Volume III: Firearm Trafficking Investigations—Part IX: Investigation Outcomes," April 2024, 5, <https://www.atf.gov/firearms/docs/report/nfcta-volume-iii-part-ix/download>.

²¹ ATF, "National Firearms Commerce and Trafficking Assessment (NFCTA), Michigan State Report," November 2023, <https://www.atf.gov/firearms/docs/report/michigan-state-report/download>. See page 6.