

U.S. Department of Justice  
Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives  
Office of the Director - Strategic Management



## 2012 Summary: Firearms Reported Lost and Stolen



## **BACKGROUND**

On January 16, 2013, President Obama announced a plan to reduce gun violence in the United States. This plan included 23 executive actions, one of which called on the Department of Justice to prepare a report analyzing information on lost and stolen guns and to make that report widely available to law enforcement. The following report was generated by ATF in response to the President's directive. The report gives an overview, for calendar year 2012, of the lost and stolen gun file entries in the National Crime Information Center (NCIC), and of the lost and stolen firearm reports submitted by Federal Firearms Licensees (FFLs) to ATF. This report will be updated and published annually.

Lost and stolen firearms pose a substantial threat to public safety and to law enforcement. Those that steal firearms commit violent crimes with stolen guns, transfer stolen firearms to others who commit crimes, and create an unregulated secondary market for firearms, including a market for those who are prohibited by law from possessing a gun. Moreover, thieves and illicit traffickers often obliterate the serial numbers of stolen firearms so that if a stolen firearm is later recovered by law enforcement, it cannot be identified as stolen or traced to the original purchaser. Lost firearms pose a similar threat. Like stolen firearms, they are most often bought and sold in an unregulated secondary market where law enforcement is unable to trace transactions. As a result, when a lost or stolen gun is later recovered from a crime scene, tracing (which only identifies the original manufacturer, the licensed dealer who sold the firearm, and the original purchaser) will not provide a direct link to the perpetrator of the crime.

While law enforcement is keenly aware that lost and stolen firearms represent a substantial public safety problem, the scope of the problem is difficult to quantify. Several factors impair ATF's ability to determine accurately the number of firearms lost and stolen from private citizens each year. Reporting by law enforcement is voluntary, not mandatory, and thus the statistics in this report likely reveal only a fraction of the problem. Additionally, even where state and local law enforcement are consistently reporting statistics, many states do not require private citizens to report the loss or theft of a firearm to local law enforcement in the first place. As such, many lost and stolen firearms go entirely unreported. Moreover, even if a firearm is reported as lost or stolen, individuals often are unable to report the serial number to law enforcement because they are not required to record the serial number or maintain other records of the firearms they own for identification purposes. As a result, many lost and stolen firearms enter secondary and illicit markets with their status undocumented and undetectable.

ATF's accounting of firearms lost or stolen from FFLs is more accurate. In 1994, Congress enacted requirements that FFLs report the theft or loss of any firearm from their inventories to both ATF and local police within 48 hours of discovery. This mandatory reporting requirement accounts for lost inventory and allows law enforcement to respond expeditiously to thefts from FFLs. Most often, these reports provide law enforcement with serial numbers and reliable descriptions. This information is closely managed to ensure that whenever law enforcement recovers a firearm lost by or stolen from a federally-licensed dealer, the recovery data is promptly provided to ATF and local authorities. In the case of theft, this information assists in the identification, apprehension, and prosecution of the thieves.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### *Firearms lost or stolen by private individuals*

To determine the number of firearms reported lost or stolen by private individuals in 2012, ATF consulted the FBI NCIC Gun File. The NCIC Gun File was developed to assist law enforcement agencies in communicating the theft, loss, and recoveries of firearms through a shared database and communications system. As noted above, however, the statistical value of the database is limited. Not all firearm thefts and losses are reported to law enforcement and, while virtually every law enforcement agency in the United States has access to NCIC, not all law enforcement agencies enter into the Gun File the firearm theft, loss, and recovery information reported to them.

FBI provided NCIC Gun File data to ATF on January 24, 2013. The data consists of counts of law enforcement entries made in 2012 into the NCIC Gun File regarding lost and stolen guns. This is raw data that has not been substantively reviewed by the FBI, has not been screened for duplicates or other data entry issues, and does not account for firearms that were subsequently found or recovered.

### *Firearms lost or stolen from FFLs*

Federal Firearms Licensees (FFLs) are required to report lost and stolen firearms within 48 hours of observed loss/theft, and that information is entered into ATF's Firearms Tracing System.<sup>1</sup> To determine the number of firearms reported as Federal Firearms Licensee Thefts/Losses in 2012, ATF conducted queries of the Firearms Tracing System on January 23, 2013. The fact that an FFL reports a firearm lost in a specific calendar year, however, does not necessarily mean that the firearm was physically lost in that calendar year. Inventory reconciliations conducted as part of the ATF inspection process (or conducted by an FFL independent of the ATF inspection process) often reveal that firearms taken into inventory by an FFL in years prior to the reconciliation are unaccounted for in the FFL's records in the year of inventory. Although some of these firearms may have been transferred to lawful purchasers, they are reported as lost because the FFL has not accounted for the disposition of the firearm in their business records. In these instances, the year of actual loss may not be known and is reported in the year that the inventory was conducted.

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<sup>1</sup>ATF's National Tracing Center maintains FFL theft/loss reports in accordance with Title 18, United States Code Section 923(g)(6). *ATF Firearms Trace Data Disclaimer- Public L. No. 112-55, Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act of 2012, Sec. 516*: Firearms submitted for tracing are not entered into the tracing system for purposes of determining which types, makes or models of firearms are used for illicit purposes. Traced firearms do not constitute a random sample and should not be considered representative of the larger universe of all firearms used by criminals, or any subset of that universe.

## **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

In 2012, NCIC received reports reflecting 190,342 lost and stolen firearms nationwide. Of those 190,342 lost and stolen firearms reported, 16,667 (9% of the total reported) were the result of thefts/losses from FFLs. Of the 16,667 firearms reported as lost or stolen from a FFL, a total of 10,915 firearms were reported as lost. The remaining 5,762 were reported as stolen.

Texas was the top state for total firearms reported lost and stolen in 2012, with 18,874 firearms, which was 10% of all firearms reported lost or stolen in the country. Pennsylvania was the top state for firearms reported lost or stolen from a FFL in 2012 with 1,502 firearms, which was 9% of all firearms reported lost or stolen from a FFL in that year. Pistols were the most common type of firearm reported stolen from a FFL in 2012 with 3,322 reported, while rifles were the most common type of firearm reported lost from a FFL in 2012 with 4,068 reported.

**LOST/STOLEN FIREARMS ENTERED INTO NCIC**

The five states with the greatest number of firearms reported lost or stolen in 2012, as reflected by NCIC entries, were as follows:

STATE	TOTAL FIREARMS REPORTED AS LOST/STOLEN IN NCIC
TEXAS	18,874
GEORGIA	12,906
FLORIDA	12,571
CALIFORNIA	10,639
NORTH CAROLINA	9,320

**Table 1-** provides a breakdown of the NCIC Gun File Entries of Lost or Stolen Firearms, arranged in alphabetical order by state:

**NCIC Lost or Stolen Firearms by State**

STATE	TOTAL FIREARMS REPORTED AS LOST OR STOLEN IN NCIC	NUMBER OF FIREARMS REPORTED AS STOLEN IN NCIC	NUMBER OF FIREARMS REPORTED AS LOST IN NCIC
ALABAMA	6,084	5,989	95
ALASKA	717	646	71
ARIZONA	5,431	5,175	256
ARKANSAS	4,091	4,049	42
CALIFORNIA	10,639	10,114	525
COLORADO	2,609	2,575	34
CONNECTICUT	974	811	163
DELAWARE	344	337	7
FLORIDA	12,571	11,756	815
GEORGIA	12,906	12,602	304
GUAM	0	0	0
HAWAII	148	141	7
IDAHO	1,087	959	128
ILLINOIS	3,302	3,302	0
INDIANA	4,774	4,728	46
IOWA	922	903	19
KANSAS	1,788	1,762	26

<b>KENTUCKY</b>	3,719	3673	46
<b>LOUISIANA</b>	5,163	5,073	90
<b>MAINE</b>	450	429	21
<b>MARYLAND</b>	1,964	1,895	69
<b>MASSACHUSETTS</b>	690	686	4
<b>MICHIGAN</b>	4,962	4,542	420
<b>MINNESOTA</b>	1,353	1,303	50
<b>MISSISSIPPI</b>	3,439	3,378	61
<b>MISSOURI</b>	4,662	4,539	123
<b>MONTANA</b>	911	852	59
<b>NEBRASKA</b>	670	662	8
<b>NEVADA</b>	2,288	2,089	199
<b>NEW HAMPSHIRE</b>	435	426	9
<b>NEW JERSEY</b>	1,604	1,562	42
<b>NEW MEXICO</b>	2,198	2,143	55
<b>NEW YORK</b>	2,839	2,387	452
<b>NORTH CAROLINA</b>	9,320	8,940	380
<b>NORTH DAKOTA</b>	273	268	5
<b>OHIO</b>	6,860	6,782	78
<b>OKLAHOMA</b>	4,695	4,683	12
<b>OREGON</b>	2491	2,367	124
<b>PENNSYLVANIA</b>	6,566	6,268	298
<b>PUERTO RICO</b>	837	739	98
<b>RHODE ISLAND</b>	226	222	4
<b>SOUTH CAROLINA</b>	5,839	5,718	121
<b>SOUTH DAKOTA</b>	314	308	6
<b>TENNESSEE</b>	6,101	5,996	105
<b>TEXAS</b>	18,874	18,435	439
<b>UTAH</b>	1,185	1,055	130
<b>VERMONT</b>	298	284	14
<b>VIRGIN ISLANDS</b>	22	20	2
<b>VIRGINIA</b>	4,062	3,926	136
<b>WASHINGTON</b>	5,053	4,857	196
<b>WASHINGTON DC</b>	7,324	7,165	159
<b>WEST VIRGINIA</b>	1,966	1,957	9
<b>WISCONSIN</b>	1,944	1,882	62
<b>WYOMING</b>	358	300	58
<b>GRAND TOTALS</b>	<b>190,342</b>	<b>183,660</b>	<b>6,682</b>

For an interactive map reflecting this data, please click [here](#).

**FIREARMS THAT WERE LOST OR STOLEN FROM A FFL**

The five states with the greatest number of firearms reported lost or stolen from FFLs in 2012 were as follows:

STATE	NUMBER OF FIREARMS REPORTED AS FFL THEFT/LOSS
PENNSYLVANIA	1,502
TEXAS	1,263
MARYLAND	984
NEW YORK	775
GEORGIA	738

**Table 2-** provides a breakdown of ATF Federal Firearms Licensee Theft/Loss reports, arranged in alphabetical order by state:

**ATF FFL Theft/Loss by State**

STATE	FFL THEFT /LOSS TOTALS	FFL THEFT TOTALS	FFL LOSS TOTALS
ALABAMA	350	231	119
ALASKA	57	11	46
ARIZONA	391	201	190
ARKANSAS	300	132	168
CALIFORNIA	636	298	338
COLORADO	362	109	253
CONNECTICUT	152	4	148
DELAWARE	30	28	2
FLORIDA	719	233	486
GEORGIA	738	389	349
GUAM	6	0	6
HAWAII	0	0	0
IDAHO	348	6	342
ILLINOIS	370	282	88
INDIANA	240	148	92
IOWA	377	58	319

STATE	FFL THEFT /LOSS TOTALS	FFL THEFT TOTALS	FFL LOSS TOTALS
KANSAS	155	54	101
KENTUCKY	303	48	255
LOUISIANA	130	107	23
MAINE	223	23	200
MARYLAND	984	98	886
MASSACHUSETTS	416	197	219
MICHIGAN	369	295	74
MINNESOTA	169	88	81
MISSISSIPPI	592	148	444
MISSOURI	461	161	300
MONTANA	99	13	86
NEBRASKA	284	6	278
NEVADA	57	12	45
NEW HAMPSHIRE	28	7	21
NEW JERSEY	2	0	2
NEW MEXICO	494	111	383
NEW YORK	775	99	676
NORTH CAROLINA	687	192	495
NORTH DAKOTA	27	23	4
OKLAHOMA	240	72	168
OREGON	95	17	78
PENNSYLVANIA	1,502	191	1,311
PUERTO RICO	1	1	0
RHODE ISLAND	68	15	53
SOUTH CAROLINA	299	210	89
SOUTH DAKOTA	28	1	27
TENNESSEE	208	101	107
TEXAS	1,263	688	575
UTAH	177	8	169
VERMONT	45	17	28
VIRGIN ISLANDS	4	0	4
VIRGINIA	272	116	156
WASHINGTON	200	14	186
WASHINGTON DC	0	0	0
WEST VIRGINIA	155	77	78
WISCONSIN	157	120	37
WYOMING	131	20	111
GRAND TOTALS	16,677	5,762	10,915

For an interactive map reflecting this data, please click [here](#).



**Table 3-** provides a breakdown of firearms reported lost or stolen by FFLs in 2012 by theft/loss type, arranged in alphabetical order by state:

**FFL Lost/Stolen Weapons by State, Type**

STATE / TERRITORY NAME	ALL REPORTS	ALL REPORTS FIREARM COUNT	BURGLARY REPORTS	BURGLARY FIREARM COUNT	LARCENY REPORTS	LARCENY FIREARM COUNT	ROBBERY REPORTS	ROBBERY FIREARM COUNT	LOSS REPORTS	LOSS FIREARM COUNT
ALABAMA	65	350	13	211	13	20	0	0	39	119
ALASKA	14	57	0	0	6	11	0	0	8	46
ARIZONA	82	391	8	140	28	61	0	0	46	190
ARKANSAS	61	300	10	110	15	22	0	0	36	168
CALIFORNIA	75	636	11	177	22	101	1	20	41	338
COLORADO	61	362	11	92	15	17	0	0	35	253
CONNECTICUT	26	152	0	0	4	4	0	0	22	148
DELAWARE	5	30	2	27	1	1	0	0	2	2
FLORIDA	162	719	22	135	72	96	2	2	66	486
GEORGIA	114	738	21	311	20	42	1	36	72	349
GUAM	2	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	6
HAWAII	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
IDAHO	16	348	0	0	6	6	0	0	10	342
ILLINOIS	31	370	8	272	5	10	0	0	18	88
INDIANA	38	240	6	103	12	22	1	23	19	92
IOWA	18	377	5	43	5	5	1	10	7	319
KANSAS	42	155	6	34	15	20	0	0	21	101
KENTUCKY	57	303	4	24	17	24	0	0	36	255
LOUISIANA	28	130	5	84	9	23	0	0	14	23
MAINE	14	223	3	20	2	3	0	0	9	200
MARYLAND	23	984	3	90	6	8	0	0	14	886
MASSACHUSETTS	36	416	2	19	9	178	0	0	25	219
MICHIGAN	54	369	22	219	11	76	0	0	21	74
MINNESOTA	31	169	6	82	6	6	0	0	19	81
MISSISSIPPI	65	592	15	125	12	14	2	9	36	444
MISSOURI	75	461	19	143	16	18	0	0	40	300
MONTANA	16	99	2	10	3	3	0	0	11	86
NEBRASKA	17	284	0	0	6	6	0	0	11	278
NEVADA	16	57	0	0	3	4	1	8	12	45
NEW HAMPSHIRE	14	28	2	4	3	3	0	0	9	21
NEW JERSEY	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
NEW MEXICO	40	494	9	93	14	18	0	0	17	383
NEW YORK	38	775	4	93	5	6	0	0	29	676
NORTH CAROLINA	84	687	18	148	23	44	0	0	43	495
NORTH DAKOTA	11	27	7	22	1	1	0	0	3	4
OHIO	83	501	15	253	27	29	0	0	41	219
OKLAHOMA	56	240	9	43	21	29	0	0	26	168

STATE / TERRITORY NAME	ALL REPORTS	ALL REPORTS FIREARM COUNT	BURGLARY REPORTS	BURGLARY FIREARM COUNT	LARCENY REPORTS	LARCENY FIREARM COUNT	ROBBERY REPORTS	ROBBERY FIREARM COUNT	LOSS REPORTS	LOSS FIREARM COUNT
OREGON	19	95	3	8	6	9	0	0	10	78
PENNSYLVANIA	87	1,502	11	134	22	57	0	0	54	1,311
PUERTO RICO	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
RHODE ISLAND	3	68	1	15	0	0	0	0	2	53
SOUTH CAROLINA	51	299	16	194	11	16	0	0	24	89
SOUTH DAKOTA	3	28	0	0	1	1	0	0	2	27
TENNESSEE	61	208	9	75	26	26	0	0	26	107
TEXAS	234	1,263	33	541	89	137	3	10	109	575
US VIRGIN ISLANDS	2	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	4
UTAH	34	177	2	4	4	4	0	0	28	169
VERMONT	15	45	3	14	3	3	0	0	9	28
VIRGINIA	77	272	13	59	39	57	0	0	25	156
WASHINGTON	31	200	3	6	6	8	0	0	22	186
WASHINGTON, D.C.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
WEST VIRGINIA	32	155	5	59	11	18	0	0	16	78
WISCONSIN	34	157	8	85	9	35	0	0	17	37
WYOMING	13	131	2	19	1	1	0	0	10	111
TOTALS	2,269	16,677	377	4,340	662	1,304	12	118	1,218	10,915

**Table 4-** provides a breakdown of firearms reported lost or stolen by FFLs in 2012 by theft/loss type, arranged by firearm type:

**Firearm Types for FFL Thefts/Losses**

FIREARM TYPES	TOTALS	BURGLARY FIREARM COUNT	LARCENY FIREARM COUNT	ROBBERY FIREARM COUNT	LOSS FIREARM COUNT
PISTOLS	6,041	2,453	779	90	2,719
RIFLES	4,905	662	162	13	4,068
SHOTGUNS	2,415	357	55	3	2,000
REVOLVERS	2,228	749	253	9	1,217
RECEIVER/FRAMES	688	23	15	0	650
SILENCERS	123	33	22	2	66
DERRINGERS	114	28	15	1	70
MACHINEGUNS	59	17	2	0	40
UNKNOWN TYPES	42	0	0	0	42
DESTRUCTIVE DEVICES	40	17	1	0	22
COMBINATION GUNS	19	1	0	0	18
ANY OTHER WEAPONS	3	0	0	0	3
TOTALS	16,677	4,340	1,304	118	10,915