

OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
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Firearms Used in the Commission of Crimes 2022

This report is available online at
<http://oag.ca.gov/publications#crime>



Division of Law Enforcement
Bureau of Forensic Services

Executive Summary

Reporting Requirement

California Penal Code section 34200 requires the Department of Justice (DOJ) to provide the Legislature, on or before April 15 of each year, a written report on the specific types of firearms used in the commission of crimes based upon information obtained from state and local crime laboratories. Although DOJ is required to produce this annual report based on data obtained from state and local crime laboratories, there is no corresponding mandate for local crime laboratories to track or provide this data.

The report must include all of the following information regarding crimes in which firearms were used:

- (a) A description of the relative occurrence of firearms most frequently used in the commission of violent¹ crimes, distinguishing whether the firearms used were handguns, rifles, shotguns, assault weapons, or other related types of weapons.
- (b) A description of specific types of firearms that are used in homicides or street gang and drug trafficking crimes.
- (c) The frequency with which stolen firearms were used in the commission of the crimes.
- (d) The frequency with which fully automatic firearms were used in the commission of the crimes.
- (e) Any trends of importance including those involving specialized ammunition or firearms modifications, such as conversion to a fully automatic weapon, removal of serial number, shortening of barrel, or use of a suppressor.

Cal. Penal Code section 34200.

Scope of Report

The 2022 Firearms Used in the Commission of Crimes report includes data from the Department's 10 regional crime laboratories², which principally serve the rural areas of California. As has been the case in previous years, the Department did not receive data from any of the local public crime laboratories that serve California's major cities and urban areas.

Therefore, caution should be exercised when using or interpreting the data contained in this report, as it may not be representative of gun use trends within urban areas or within California as a whole.

¹ Violent felonies are defined in Penal Code section 667.5.

² A map of the Department's regional laboratories and the counties served by each is available at <https://oag.ca.gov/bfs/services>.

Report

The 10 regional crime laboratories operated by the Department's Bureau of Forensic Services (BFS) completed 540 requests for firearms analysis during the 2022 calendar year. Sixty-seven firearms qualified for inclusion in this report. A firearm is considered to be "qualified" for this report if forensic testing has positively tied the firearm to at least one of the violent crimes defined by Penal Code section 667.5. Small inconsistencies in data totals are attributable to the fact that the categories in this report, other than firearm types and calibers, are not mutually exclusive; as a result, individual firearms may fit, and be counted within, multiple categories. For example, if a laboratory examined a stolen shotgun with a shortened barrel used in a street gang homicide, that weapon would be counted in each of those categories.

Types of Firearms and Calibers of Ammunition Used in Crimes

The 67 qualifying firearms examined³ by BFS laboratories during this reporting period included 63 handguns (94.0%), three rifles (4.5%), and one shotgun (1.5%) (Figure 1). Of the 67 qualifying firearms, two handguns and one rifle were California assault weapons⁴; another two handguns were machine guns.

The most commonly-encountered calibers were 9 mm Luger (S&W), followed by the 40 Smith & Wesson and 45 Automatic Colt.

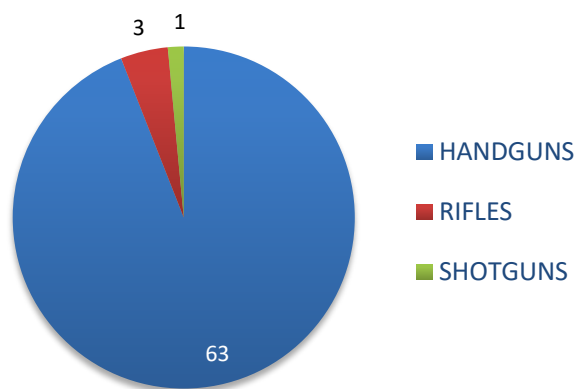


Figure 1. Types of firearms used in crimes.

³ This figure may not include all qualifying firearms received during the reporting period, as qualification is determined upon examination. It may include qualifying firearms received during the previous reporting period.

⁴ As defined in Penal Code sections 30510 and 30515.

Pistol (ACP) (Figure 2).

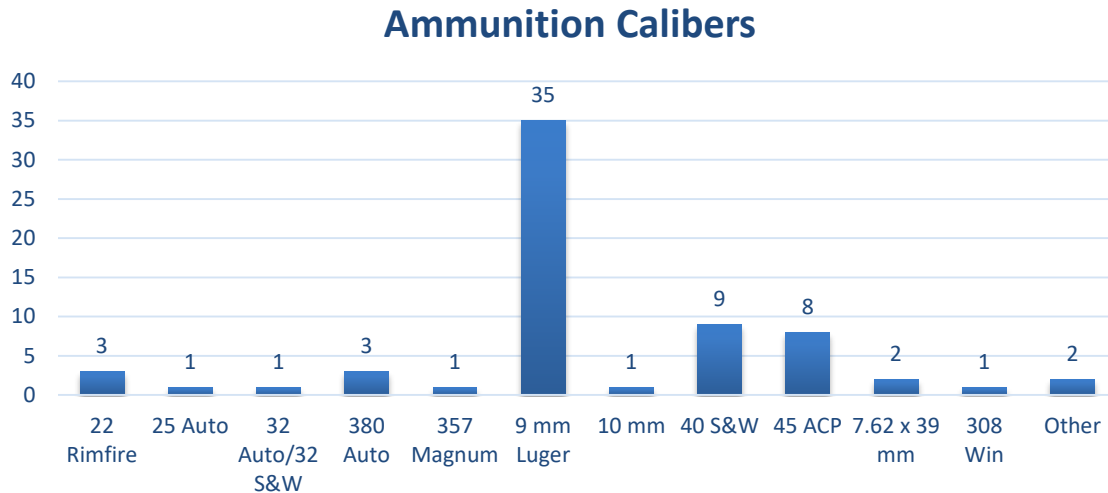


Figure 2. Calibers of ammunition used in crimes (displayed by caliber size).

Firearms Used in Crimes of Violence Other than Homicides

Thirty-six (53.7%) of the 67 qualifying firearms examined by BFS laboratories were submitted in cases involving crimes of violence other than homicides. These 36 firearms included 33 handguns (91.7%) and three rifles (8.3%) (Figure 3). Two of the handguns were fully-automatic machine guns and one of the rifles was a California assault weapon. The firearms examined in this category did not include any shotguns.

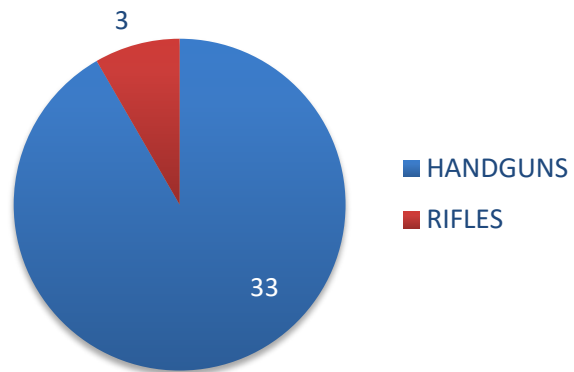


Figure 3. Firearms used in crimes of violence other than homicides.

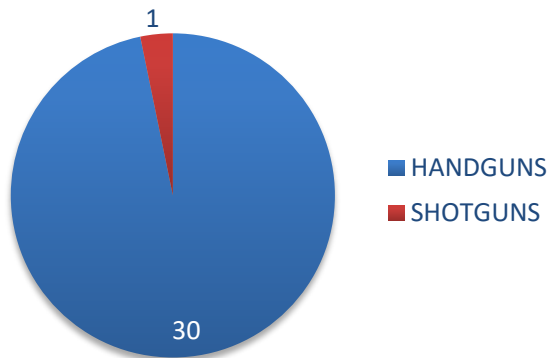


Figure 4. Firearms used in homicides.

Firearms Used in Homicides

Of the 67 qualifying firearms examined during this reporting period, 31 (46.3%) were submitted to the Department's laboratories in homicide cases. These 31 firearms included 30 handguns (96.8%) and one shotgun (less than 1%) (Figure 4). Two of the handguns were California assault weapons. No rifles or fully-automatic firearms were linked to homicides.

Firearms Without Serial Numbers

Seventeen of the 67 firearms (25.4%) were submitted without serial numbers (Figure 5). Fifteen of these were kit firearms that are typically marketed in an unfinished state, 80 percent complete, and require additional machining and parts to produce a functional firearm. Eight of the 15 kit-type firearms were used in homicides. One of the eight was also a California assault weapon.

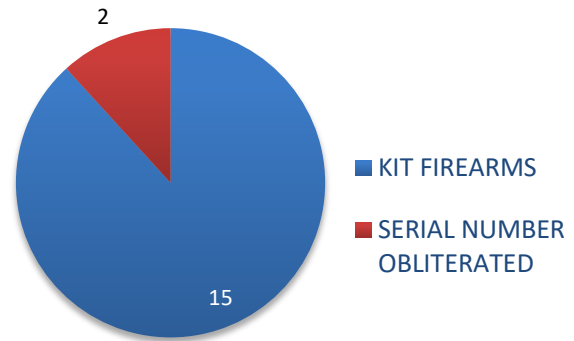


Figure 5. No serial numbers present.

Two of the firearms submitted without serial numbers were traditionally-manufactured firearms with serial numbers obliterated or removed. One of the two firearms examined with an obliterated serial number was a machine gun. Both firearms were used in crimes of violence other than homicides.

Weapons Examined by Year

The number of California assault weapons examined by BFS laboratories was the same in both 2022 and 2021. There has been very little change overall in the number of assault weapons examined in the last 20 years; as a category, their numbers have been nominal relative to the total number of firearms examined (Figure 6).

For information on California's assault weapons laws and regulations, please visit the Department's website at <https://www.oag.ca.gov/ogvp/fed-assault-weapons-ban>.

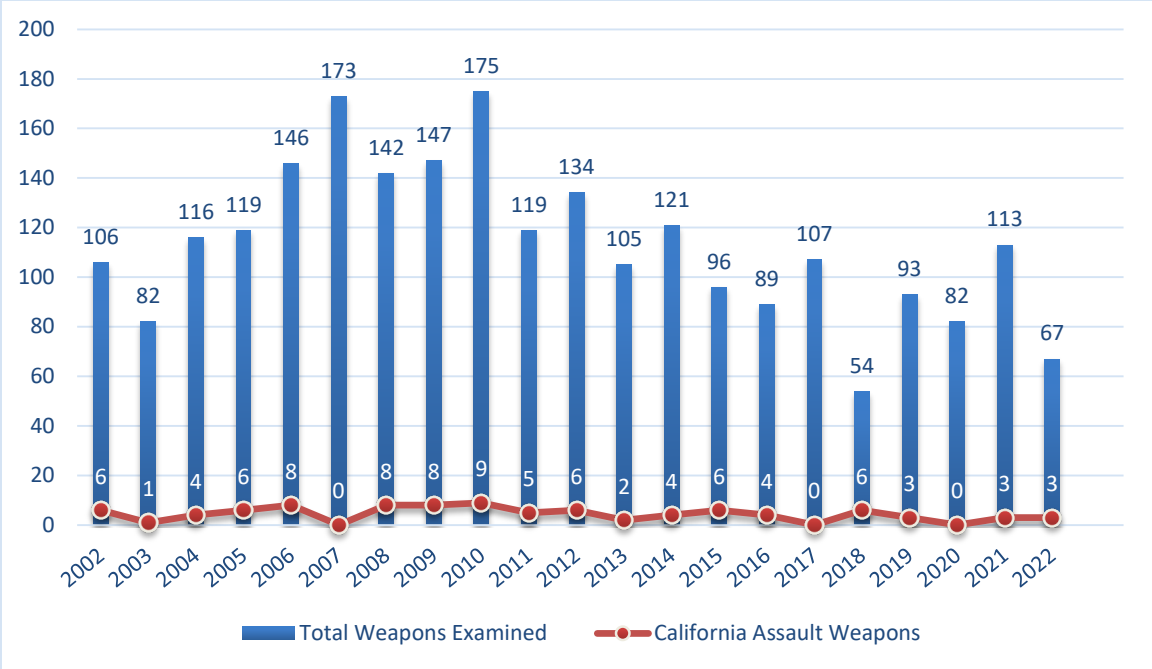


Figure 6. Weapons examined by year.

Trends in 2022 Data

California Assault Weapons

Three of the 67 qualifying firearms examined in 2022 were identified as California Assault Weapons (as defined in Pen. Code §§ 30510 and 30515), (see Figure 6 on page 4).

Drug Trafficking Crimes

None of the qualifying firearms were identified as being used in drug trafficking crimes.

Fully-Automatic Firearms (Machine Guns, Submachine Guns or Fully-Automatic Conversions)

Two of the qualifying firearms examined this year exhibited fully-automatic firing.

Officer-Involved Shooting Incidents

Four qualifying firearms were identified as being related to officer-involved shooting incidents. Three were handguns and one was a rifle.

Short-Barreled Shotguns or Rifles

None of the examined qualifying firearms were classified as short-barreled or short overall-length shotguns or rifles.

Stolen Firearms

None of the examined qualifying firearms were confirmed to have been reported stolen. However, information related to a firearm's ownership status is not often provided to the laboratory conducting the forensic examination.

Street Gang Crimes

One of the qualifying firearms was identified as being related to street gang crimes.

Suppressors

No firearms equipped with a suppressor (silencer) were examined in 2022.

Unusual Ammunition

There were no reported examinations of armor-piercing, exploding, Glazer-type, incendiary, frangible,⁵ or tracer ammunition.

⁵ A frangible bullet is designed to fragment or disintegrate upon impact with an object harder than itself, in order to minimize the potential for damage from ricochet or penetration.