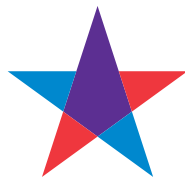


***UNCOVERING THE  
TRUTH ABOUT  
ROCHESTER  
CRIME GUNS***



**BRADY**  
UNITED AGAINST GUN VIOLENCE

Brady's analysis in this report is based on firearm trace data provided to Brady by the Rochester Police Department in December 2022.

# ABOUT BRADY

Founded in 1974, Brady works across Congress, courts, and communities, uniting gun owners and non-gun owners alike, to take action, not sides, and end America's gun violence epidemic. Our organization today carries the name of Jim Brady, who was shot and severely injured in the assassination attempt on President Ronald Reagan. Jim and his wife Sarah led the fight to pass federal legislation requiring background checks for gun sales. Brady continues to uphold Jim and Sarah's legacy by uniting Americans from coast to coast — red and blue, young and old, liberal and conservative — against the epidemic of gun violence.

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# I. INTRODUCTION

Rochester, New York, is a midsize city on the shores of Lake Ontario. With 210,606 residents as of the 2020 census, it is the state's fourth-largest city, trailing New York City, Buffalo, and Yonkers. Rochester is surrounded by a number of suburbs, which together comprise the Greater Rochester area. According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) Uniform Crime Report, Rochester's overall crime rate falls below the national average. However, Rochester's homicides, especially firearm-involved homicides, have risen in number since 2019 — and at a higher rate than many cities of far greater size (see [Rochester Police Department's Open Data Portal](#) for further detail on overall and firearm homicides<sup>1</sup>).

Community groups and local leaders in Rochester have become increasingly concerned about the rise in violence, particularly the violence fueled by firearms. As such, these groups and leaders sought out an analysis of crime guns recovered in Rochester. Ultimately, the city partnered with Brady to analyze gun trace data provided by the Rochester Police Department and produce this report containing an overview of the findings.

Every gun used in crime has an origin and a story, and the overwhelming majority of both begin in the legal marketplace. Understanding how guns have been diverted from legal commerce to the illegal market and make their way to crime scenes is essential to crafting evidence-based, supply-side solutions to the American gun violence epidemic.

There should be nothing controversial about a comprehensive tracing approach to reduce gun violence. Epidemiologists and other scientists routinely study the origins of public health challenges in order to develop effective solutions, treatments, and preventative measures. Unfortunately, the most meaningful national data on the sources and paths of crime guns have been hidden from researchers, journalists, policymakers, and the general public — including the communities most impacted by gun violence — for two decades. The gun industry successfully lobbied the federal government to restrict access to this critical trace data, and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) has aided the industry's efforts by adopting an overly broad interpretation of regulatory restrictions.

The city of Rochester commissioned this report based on 6,036 crime guns recovered in the city from 2012 to 2022 identifying — for the first time in

**UNDERSTANDING HOW GUNS HAVE BEEN DIVERTED FROM LEGAL COMMERCE TO THE ILLEGAL MARKET AND MAKE THEIR WAY TO CRIME SCENES IS ESSENTIAL TO CRAFTING EVIDENCE-BASED, SUPPLY-SIDE SOLUTIONS TO THE AMERICAN GUN VIOLENCE EPIDEMIC.**

decades — the gun dealers and manufacturers who appear to supply the most crime guns recovered locally. In doing so, Rochester joins a small number of states and localities that have released crime gun trace data or trace reports over the last 20 years. These local trace reports are critical for developing comprehensive, life-saving solutions to prevent gun violence. They also highlight the need for the federal government to publicly release national-level trace data in order for policymakers, community stakeholders, and the American public to better understand what feeds the gun violence epidemic — and which solutions we should develop to most effectively starve it.

Gun trace data enables the public, policymakers, and law enforcement to hold the gun industry accountable for its role in supplying crime guns, ultimately saving lives. Equipped with the knowledge that a small number of gun dealers are contributing directly — and disproportionately — to the city’s surge in shootings, Rochester’s leaders can put political, legal, and economic pressure on crime gun suppliers to implement reforms needed to ensure responsible and safe firearms dealing. Like all data, however, gun trace data has its limits; its insights, while key to understanding gun trafficking, are only one step in the process of stopping the irresponsible supply of guns used in crime. Last year, Brady unveiled an extensive and ever-growing database containing another piece to the puzzle: ATF inspection reports of federal firearms licensees (FFLs) to whom the agency has either issued a warning letter or handed down a more severe remedy in response to cited violations of gun laws. We encourage readers to view that resource, the Gun Store Transparency Project, at [www.gunstoretransparency.org](http://www.gunstoretransparency.org).

It’s important to keep in mind that many of the 6,036 crime guns in the database are likely associated with any number of victims and their families. If this were not staggering enough, the devastating ripple effects gun violence inflicts on families, neighborhoods, and communities cannot be captured by statistics. We welcome researchers to study this report and build on our analysis; we implore journalists to report on not just the tragic results of gun violence incidents, but how crime guns end up in our communities; we urge lawmakers and law enforcement to adopt life-saving, supply-side solutions to gun violence; and we call on federal, state, and local authorities across the country to help improve the study of gun violence prevention methods by proactively releasing more of the trace data so vital to such research. The gun industry must adopt meaningful reforms to ensure firearms are transferred safely and responsibly, as it is neither fair nor just to ask the communities suffering the immense harms of gun violence to also be responsible for building a future free of it. Brady invites you to join in advocating for solutions that address the supply side of gun violence.

## II. KEY TERMS

### WHAT ARE “CRIME GUNS” AND WHERE DO THEY COME FROM?

A crime gun is a gun that has been recovered by law enforcement after being used or suspected of having been used in a crime, or whose possession may in itself have been a crime. A crime gun might be a stolen firearm, a firearm found at a scene of a crime, or a firearm used in a crime. Almost every crime gun has one factor in common: It originated

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***A CRIME GUN IS A GUN THAT HAS BEEN RECOVERED BY LAW ENFORCEMENT AFTER BEING USED OR SUSPECTED OF HAVING BEEN USED IN A CRIME, OR WHOSE POSSESSION MAY IN ITSELF HAVE BEEN A CRIME.***

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from a firearm manufacturer. A 2019 Department of Justice report estimated that 43% of all crime guns come from the “illegal firearm market.”<sup>2</sup> However, firearms obtained via illicit commerce most often have never fallen outside the law before; crime guns are very often guns with long initial histories of adhering to the law throughout their manufacture, distribution, and eventual sale from a licensed dealer to a first buyer. Determining how legally purchased or manufactured firearms make their way to crime scenes is vital for law enforcement and policymakers aiming to address the origins of the illegal gun market.

### **WHAT IS “TRACE DATA” AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?**

When a firearm is found at or associated with a crime scene, law enforcement agencies have the ability to trace it through a database maintained by the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF). Law enforcement agencies can enter the make, model, caliber, and serial number of a specific firearm into ATF’s eTrace system, allowing them to follow the flow of that firearm from its legal fabrication or importation by a manufacturer/importer, to a wholesaler or distributor, to a federally licensed firearms dealer (FFL), and to the firearm’s original retail purchaser. However, at any point in this commercial flow from manufacture/import to sale, firearms can be diverted to the illegal market. It is vital that law

enforcement not only trace crime guns via ATF’s eTrace system to determine the origins of these weapons, but also investigate patterns of diversion to the illegal market. Identifying and disrupting these patterns can greatly stem the flow of crime guns. Unfortunately, constraints placed on local law enforcement agencies can be a barrier to such investigations; most have limited resources and are either prohibited or discouraged from conducting investigations outside their jurisdiction. Since crime guns can originate outside the jurisdiction where they are recovered, crime gun source investigations frequently lead beyond the local law enforcement agency’s authority, necessitating cross-jurisdictional collaboration.

The majority of FFLs in the United States are responsible business owners who sell firearms in compliance with federal, state, and local law. Data last provided by ATF over 20 years ago shows that only a small minority supply the criminal market with guns; about 5% of firearm dealers are responsible for around 90% of recovered crime guns.<sup>3</sup> Some claim that these statistics are driven by an FFL’s sales volume, but research testing this hypothesis has resulted in preliminary evidence which suggests otherwise.<sup>4</sup> A second study corroborated this, finding that while some FFL characteristics were risk factors for a high rate of crime-related gun recoveries, an FFL’s volume of guns sold was an inadequate predictor of disproportionate traces.<sup>5</sup> ATF itself has noted

that “sales volume alone does not account for the disproportionately large number of traces associated with these firearms dealers,”<sup>6</sup> but the agency has found a significant association between high numbers of crime gun traces and an FFL’s lack of compliance with federal firearms laws.<sup>7</sup>

## WHAT IS THE TIAHRT AMENDMENT?

Prior to 2003, ATF published nationwide trace data analyses on the origins of crime guns. However, due to the lobbying efforts of the gun industry, the “Tiahrt Amendment” was added to the 2003 federal appropriations bill, restricting ATF from spending funds to publicize disaggregated trace data. That amendment was carried forward into future appropriations bills and ultimately became permanent. In response to the Tiahrt Amendment, the ATF adopted such a broad interpretation of the amendment’s restrictions that very little information related to trace data ever makes its way to the public. Instead, the results of ATF firearm traces are reported only to the law enforcement agency that originally recovered the crime gun and entered it into the eTrace system. The requesting agency must affirmatively opt into data sharing before any other agencies in the same state can see or make use of its tracing information. As a result, there is often no coordinated analysis of firearm trace data by local, county, or state agencies — and while ATF produces high-level annual reports listing the type, caliber, and state of origin of traced crime guns, the publicly-available data too often stops there.

## WHAT CAN TRACE DATA TELL US? WHAT TRACING DETAILS INDICATE POTENTIAL TRAFFICKING?

Making trace data public allows local communities

and law enforcement agencies to identify the gun dealers that transfer the largest number of crime guns. **The last time national trace data was available, it showed that a mere 5% of dealers were responsible for 90% of crime gun transfers, and that only 1.2% of gun dealers were responsible for 57% of crime guns.**<sup>8</sup> Approximately 86% of gun dealers did not have a single firearm traced back to them in a given year.<sup>9</sup> With Northeastern University, ATF developed a series of “trafficking indicators,” or characteristics of gun dealers, transactions, or guns themselves that are associated with illegal firearms trafficking. One such indicator is a short time-to-crime (the time elapsed from retail sale to recovery by law enforcement). If a gun dealer has a high number of associated crime gun traces with a short time-to-crime (under three years), this indicates that guns from that source are likely being acquired for the purpose of being trafficked.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, according to ATF, recovery of a gun that was first sold less than three years prior “signals direct diversion, by illegal firearms trafficking — for instance through straw purchases or off-the-books sales by corrupt FFLs.”<sup>11</sup> Straw purchasers are those who illegally buy guns on behalf of others, concealing the identity of the actual purchaser. Some straw buyers purchase for a specific person; others operate as illegal traffickers, buying large quantities of firearms for off-the-books resale — usually to individuals legally prohibited from purchasing a gun themselves.

Trace data also reveals the types of guns most frequently used in crime. In the past, this information has resulted in stronger regulations for specific firearm types. Revealing the gun models most disproportionately used in crime — and which have special appeal to gun traffickers —



exposes how some gun manufacturers exploit the lucrative illegal market by knowing what criminals want and being sure those wants are available for sale. In short, trace data is an essential tool for identifying and holding accountable the faction of irresponsible gun dealers and manufacturers who quietly cater to the illegal gun trafficking market. Families of the injured and killed deserve to know how their loved ones were harmed, and communities deserve to know the sources of the illegal guns flooding their streets. It is only with this knowledge that they can take targeted action to prevent further tragedy.

### III. GUN TRACE DATA

#### LIMITATIONS

For several reasons, gun trace data may not present a comprehensive story of gun crime in a particular jurisdiction. Not all guns recovered by law enforcement are traced, and many guns used in crimes are never recovered. In addition, law enforcement agencies, when submitting data to be shared, might choose to omit from that submission certain variables concerning details of the crime or of the recovered weapon; occasionally, too, a trace cannot return complete information about a gun or its first purchase, perhaps because of inadequacies in a dealer’s required records. Finally, older guns

may have been purchased at dealers now out of business. Because older traces are more difficult to match to dealers, some tables and charts in this analysis focus on recent recoveries and “short time-to-crime” firearms, as these matches are most likely to provide accurate and actionable information. Importantly, guns with a short time-to-crime are also more likely to be associated with gun trafficking, as explained above. **Despite these limitations, the Rochester gun trace data paints the clearest public picture in a decade of the harm crime guns are doing throughout the city — and, crucially, who is responsible for flooding the streets with weapons.**

#### TRACE DATA AND SUPPLY-SIDE SOLUTIONS TO GUN VIOLENCE

Most efforts to prevent gun violence injuries and deaths focus on the perpetrators of violence. These demand-side efforts, whether public policy, criminal justice reform, local interventions, or social service programs, are necessary to save lives. Alone, however, they are insufficient to end America’s epidemic of gun violence. A supply-side approach to gun violence prevention complements these strategies by focusing on the supply of crime guns: encouraging elected officials, community members, and law enforcement to address not just the shooter, but also the supply chain and source of the firearm. By holding gun dealers, manufacturers,

***THE ROCHESTER GUN TRACE DATA PAINTS THE CLEAREST PUBLIC PICTURE IN A DECADE OF THE HARM CRIME GUNS ARE DOING THROUGHOUT THE CITY — AND, CRUCIALLY, WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR FLOODING THE STREETS WITH WEAPONS.***

and distributors accountable when they act irresponsibly, local communities can reduce homicide and shooting rates in even the most impacted neighborhoods. In other words, a supply-side strategy is a critical aspect of a comprehensive public health approach to reducing gun violence.

## WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED FROM THIS DATA? WHICH SUPPLY-SIDE SOLUTIONS SHOULD BE IMPLEMENTED?

**1. A small percentage of dealers account for a majority of Rochester’s crime guns.** Rochester’s data indicates the city’s own crime gun problem can be reduced significantly by focusing resources on a small subset of specific “problem” dealers. As most FFLs sell few or no crime guns, zeroing in on those who do helps make enforcement more efficient — and, it follows, more effective. Federal, state, and local authorities should not only give “problem” dealers greater scrutiny, but actively pressure them into adopting reforms toward full legal compliance — and this pressure should never be a bluff; ignoring official warnings and remaining noncompliant should invariably lead to fines, shutdowns, and whatever other enforcement actions are relevant, including criminal prosecution. Gun manufacturers must also be pressured to stop supplying large crime gun dealers with firearms.

**2. Greater Rochester has a homegrown crime gun problem.** Nearly all of the top dealers of crime guns recovered in Rochester are based in Monroe County, accounting for a substantial number of crime guns. Local police and elected officials should be aware of local crime gun sources and — as mentioned above — hold them strictly accountable for their outsized contributions to the area’s gun violence problem. The Rochester Police Department should partner with ATF, state agencies, and neighboring law enforcement

agencies to ensure firearms regulations and laws are enforced in their jurisdictions.

**3. Dealers with the most traces tend to be independent businesses, but chain stores’ sales practices also need improvement.** Dealers with large numbers of traces should implement safer business practices. For dealers that are part of large corporate chains, this implementation should be wide-scale across all locations. Doing so will have a measurable impact on crime gun availability throughout the state. For example, after a top source crime gun dealer in Milwaukee decided to stop selling certain cheap handguns — “Saturday Night Specials” — frequently recovered in connection with crime, there followed a 71% decrease in new recoveries of the guns by Milwaukee law enforcement, plus a 44% decrease in recoveries of firearms exhibiting signs of having been trafficked.<sup>12</sup> Ideally, the industry should make these reforms proactively, although legislatures can — and should — codify such requirements into law if the businesses involved fail to act voluntarily. For more information about safe gun industry business practices, see Brady’s [Gun Dealer Code of Conduct](#).

**4. Crime guns circulate long after their dealers go out of business.** While improving and strengthening dealer business practices will eventually reduce the number of guns on Rochester’s streets, the impact may take time to be felt; guns are durable goods that can be used for many years. In the short term, focusing enforcement efforts against those sellers most responsible for stuffing the streets with guns is an effective strategy, but consistently enforcing state, local, and federal laws and regulations is imperative to achieving greater and greater reductions in the availability of crime guns.

**5. Ghost guns are on the rise.** Like many cities across the nation and the state of New York, Rochester has seen an alarming increase in the number of ghost guns used in criminal activity. Local, state, and federal officials need to take legislative action banning the sale and possession of ghost guns, which are designed for — and even marketed toward — individuals looking to commit crimes and people who cannot legally purchase firearms.

## HOW WILL SUPPLY-SIDE SOLUTIONS LEAD TO FEWER GUN DEATHS AND INJURIES?

Significant progress in reducing gun trafficking and gun crime will be made if elected officials and law enforcement ensure dealers are following all laws and regulations — and training their employees to understand and abide by them as well. Because the federal government has failed to hold these dealers accountable (see case study on page 23), state and local governments must step in. If more states and localities enforce existing gun laws within their borders, it will change the behaviors and business practices of gun suppliers, which evidence shows leads to fewer guns being diverted into the illicit market.

Criminal court records, for example, demonstrate that gun traffickers often identify and select stores where they can most easily buy a gun in a straw purchase, then return to those stores again and again. Similarly, research has shown that the types of firearms a dealer sells can attract gun traffickers, and that if the most desirable guns were no longer sold, fewer of them would be recovered in crime, and fewer recovered guns overall would display trafficking indicia.<sup>13</sup>

Evidence also shows that certain supply-side policies reduce gun-related crime. For example, after suing FFLs found to be top sources of NYPD-recovered crime guns, the city of New York required extensive reforms of those dealers' business practices that were tailored to prevent straw purchases and other illegal transactions — plus third-party oversight ensuring the dealers adhered to those reforms. Subsequently, the odds that a crime gun sold by one of the dealers was later recovered in New York dropped by 84%.<sup>14</sup> Studies have also found that state-level regimes that provide comprehensive gun dealer oversight and regular compliance inspections deter illegal gun sales,<sup>15</sup> that state gun dealer licensing requirements and laws authorizing inspections or audits of gun dealers are independently associated with up to 51% lower firearm homicide rates,<sup>16</sup> and that state-level gun sale regulations result in fewer crime gun traces to dealers in those states.<sup>17</sup>

Conversely, *lack* of gun dealer accountability and oversight are associated with an increase in crime guns: After the passage of Tiahrt, a second study using the Milwaukee Police Department's trace data found an associated 203% increase in the number of guns diverted within a year of sale by the Milwaukee gun dealer mentioned in section II above.<sup>18</sup> Additionally, states that do not permit or require gun dealer inspections have been found to be the sources of crime guns recovered in other states at a rate 50% greater than states that do (and are similarly the source of a much higher proportion of short time-to-crime guns).<sup>19</sup> As these studies make clear, safer gun dealer business practices and enhanced regulation and oversight together reduce the availability of guns in the illicit market, thereby reducing gun crime.

# IV. FINDINGS: CRIME GUNS IN ROCHESTER

The gun trace dataset provided by the Rochester Police Department includes 6,036 gun trace records, dating from 2012-2022. For each trace record, the database includes at minimum some information about:

- the gun, such as make and model;
- the crime, including date and location;
- the recovery, including date and location; and
- the gun’s possessor at the time of recovery.

This report explores all of the Rochester gun trace data, with an emphasis on the last three years (2020-2022). **Table 1** shows several descriptive features of the records in the database for these three years, as well as the dataset as a whole.

## WHAT TYPES OF GUNS ARE RECOVERED AND TRACED?

Looking at traces from 2020 to 2022, the most “typical” gun recovered in Rochester is a 9mm pistol made by Taurus. **Chart A.1** shows the frequency of each type of gun recovered by year. Handguns (pistols, revolvers, and derringers) made up 83% of all traced guns in 2022. Handguns are known to be popular among gun traffickers due to their smaller size and easy concealability; yet many handguns, particularly semi-automatic handguns, have just as much firepower — and can shoot just as many rounds — as larger guns. The ten-year trend shows that handgun recoveries are becoming more and more prevalent than recoveries of long guns, like shotguns and rifles (see **Chart A.2**).

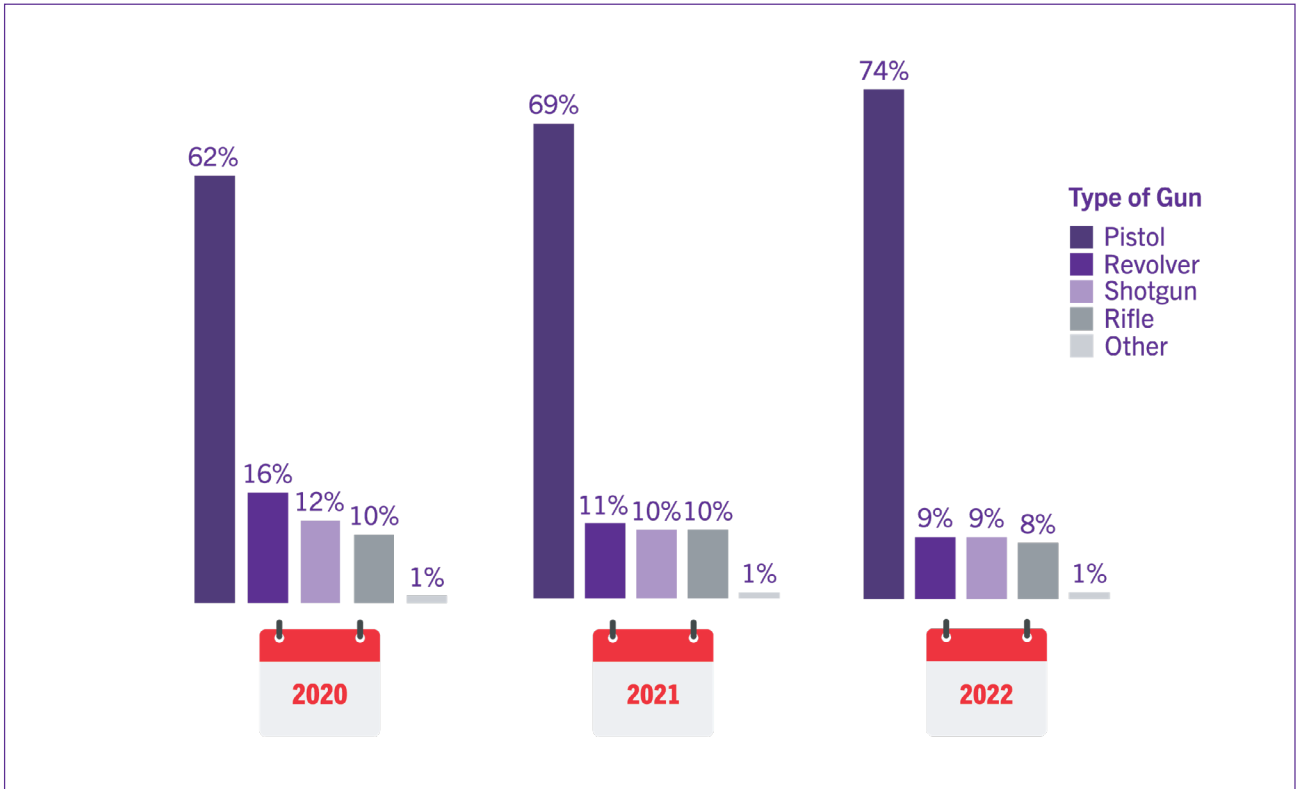
**TABLE 1: GUN TRACE RECORDS IN ROCHESTER GUN TRACING DATABASE**

	2022	2021	2020	Past 10 Years (2012-2022)
Total traces	680	568	572	6,036
Total traces matched to dealer*	579	490	476	5,053
Traces to in-state dealers	147	130	159	2,138
Traces to out-of-state dealers	430	359	317	2,885
Traces to active dealers	373	286	260	1,961
Traces with “time-to-crime” 3 years or less	187	163	138	1,028
Traces with “time-to-crime” less than 1 year	70	79	74	459
Traces of handguns	563	455	446	4,080
Traces of long guns	115	110	124	1,945
Traces of firearms used in violent crime	42	37	48	357
Used in homicide	16	15	3	47
Used in assault	6	2	17	102
Used in robbery	10	7	8	75
Traces of firearms possessed illegally	549	441	375	3,829
Traces of firearms with unlisted crime type	1	30	32	707

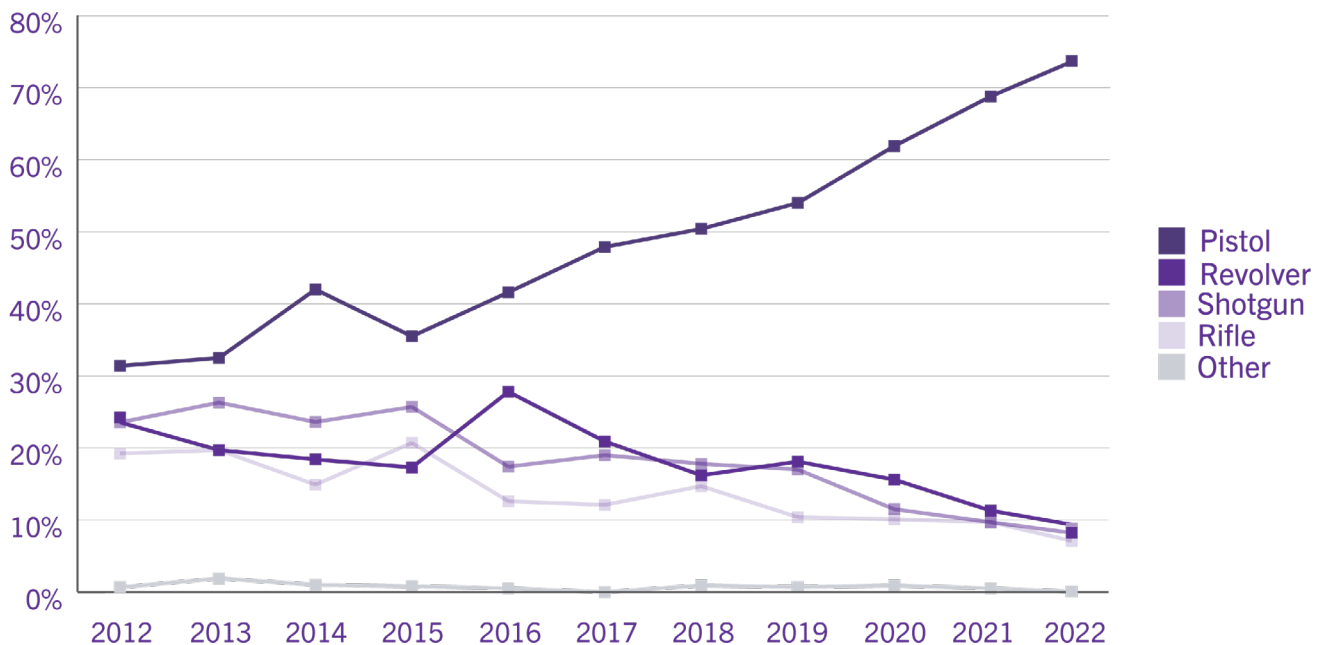
\* 30 of the crime guns traced to dealers did not include data on the state where the dealer was located.

### CHART A.1: TRACED CRIME GUNS IN ROCHESTER BY FIREARM TYPE (2020-2022)

MOST TRACED GUNS IN ROCHESTER ARE HANDGUNS



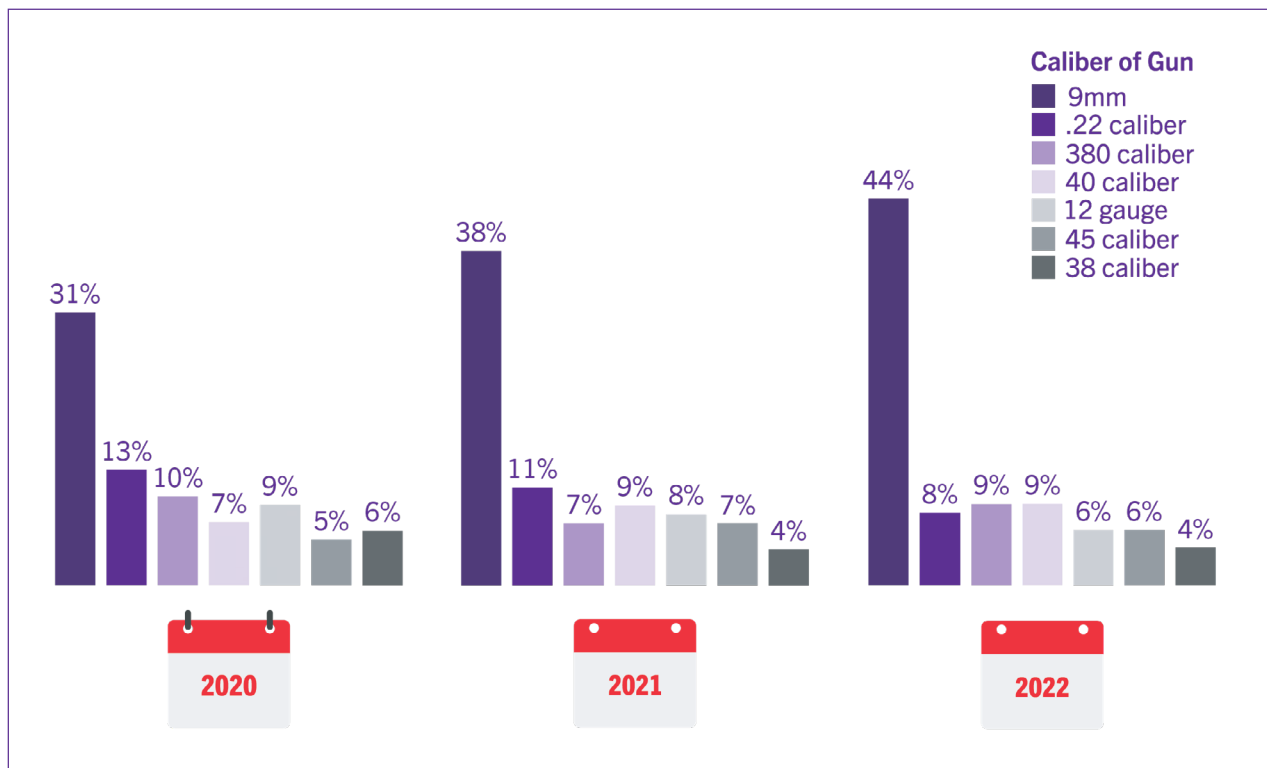
### CHART A.2: INCREASE IN TRACED HANDGUNS IN ROCHESTER OVER TIME (2012-2022)



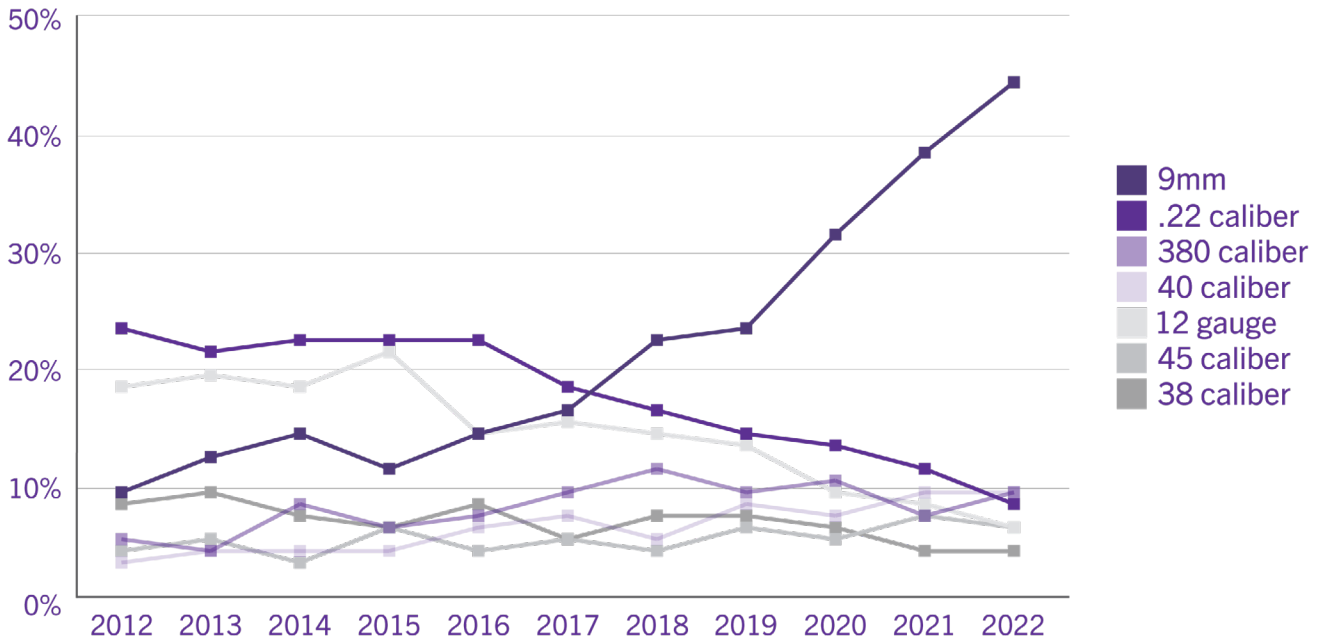
**Chart B.1** shows the most frequent calibers of traced guns each of the past three years, with 9mm consistently exhibiting significantly more recoveries than the second most frequently-traced firearm, .22 caliber. Caliber is used to describe the size of a rifle or handgun bore (the internal barrel measurement) and the size of cartridges (bullets) designed for different bores. Most easily described as the size of bullets, caliber is often a delineation of potential lethality or destructive capabilities. For example, a 9mm caliber bullet hits with more

impact and is considered both more lethal and destructive than a .22 caliber bullet (although both are lethal). Caliber differentiation can also indicate whether a specific firearm is a rifle or a handgun. For example, .38 caliber ammunition is usually used in handguns. Over the past decade, 9mm has become the caliber of choice for crime guns recovered in Rochester, eclipsing .22 caliber and 12 gauge, which were most popular between 2012 and 2017, and continuing to rise (see **Chart B.2**).

**CHART B.1: TRACED GUNS IN ROCHESTER BY FIREARM CALIBER (2020-2022)**



**CHART B.2: TRACED GUNS IN ROCHESTER BY FIREARM CALIBER (2012-2022)**



Finally, the data reveal the most common makes and models of guns recovered and traced by Rochester law enforcement. Not surprisingly, popular handgun manufacturers top the frequency chart, but the database includes firearms from 278 different gunmakers. **Table 2** lists the top 20 manufacturers whose firearms were most frequently recovered and traced in Rochester between 2020 and 2022, including their overall

ranking across the full dataset. Guns made by Taurus, Smith & Wesson, Glock, Ruger, and Polymer80 are recovered in Rochester and traced at rates substantially higher than the next most common makers of firearms for the past three years. Polymer80, which makes parts to assemble ghost guns at home that are often sold without a background check, is the only one of these with a substantial increase from all other years.<sup>20</sup>

**TABLE 2: MANUFACTURERS OF MOST FREQUENTLY TRACED FIREARMS**

MANUFACTURER	TRACES 2020-2022	RANK	TRACES 2012-2022	RANKS
Taurus	220	1	417	2
Smith & Wesson	184	2	548	1
Glock	176	3	316	4
Ruger	139	4	399	3
Polymer80	99	5	102	14
Mossberg	50	6	289	5
Unknown	49	7	258	6
HS Produkt	47	8	79	16
Hi-Point	41	9	156	8
SCCY Industries	40	10	59	23
Remington	38	11	254	7
Savage	30	12	149	10
Keltec	29	13	95	15
SIG Sauer	29	13	65	18
Colt	28	15	134	12
Bersa	21	16	57	27
Sun City Machinery	19	17	50	33
Harrington & Richardson	18	18	152	9
Cobra Enterprises	18	18	45	38
Jimenez Arms	17	20	59	23
CBC Industries	17	20	58	25

Knowing the makes, models, and calibers of the most frequently-recovered crime guns provides insight into the preferred firearms of the illicit market. This information is important for gun dealers to know because it allows them to exercise heightened diligence when transferring such firearms. It is also important information for manufacturers, who should make every effort to avoid designing, pricing, and/or marketing firearms in ways that appeal to the criminal market. One case in point concerns a set of manufacturers that produced popular low-quality, cheap (less than \$150),<sup>21</sup> short-barrel handguns in the 1990s, commonly called “Saturday Night Specials” or “junk” guns.

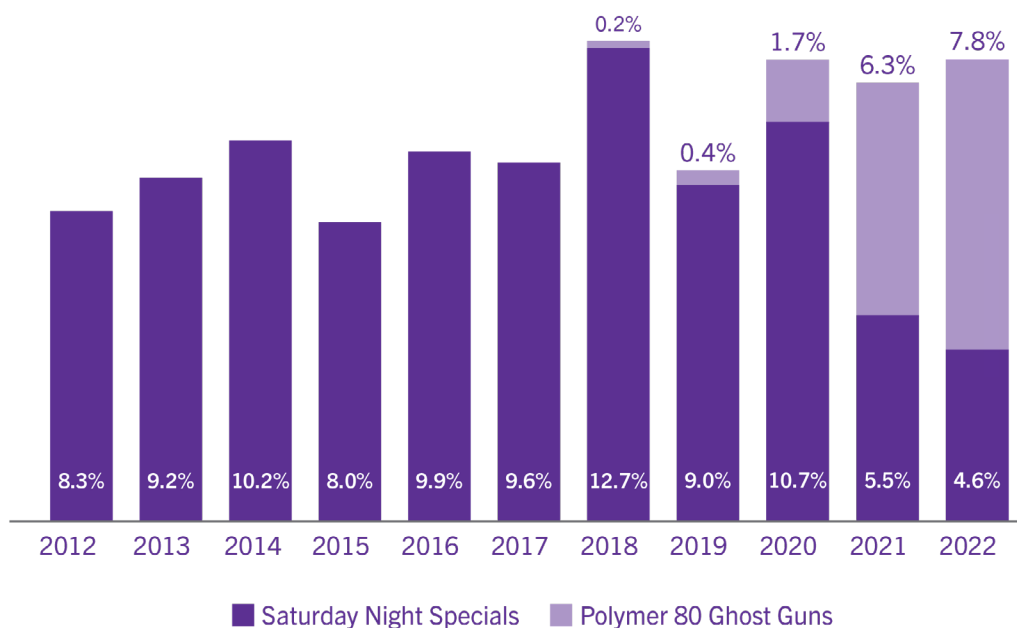
National trace data from the time showed that these guns were used in a disproportionate amount of gun crime. While the lowest-priced handguns from the top makers now retail around \$400, some cheap handguns from the “Saturday Night Special” era are unfortunately still on the streets and being used in crime, as shown in Table 3, which lists guns in the gun tracing database made by the most notorious “junk” firearm firms. Since 2012, over 500 of these guns have been recovered and traced. The share of traced guns that are “Saturday Night Specials” has decreased from its peak in 2018, but, as seen in **Chart C**, this decline correlates almost exactly with the rise in ghost guns recovered in



**TABLE 3: TRACED “SATURDAY NIGHT SPECIALS” BY YEAR**

MANUFACTURER	2022	2021	2020	2012-2022
Hi-Point Firearms (still in business)	12	9	20	156
Cobra Enterprises (ceased production in 2020)	6	4	8	45
Jimenez Arms (ceased production in 2006)	2	5	10	59
Raven Arms (destroyed by fire in 1991)	2	3	7	58
Lorcin Engineering (ceased production in 1998)	2	3	5	50
Davis Industries (closed in 1992)	4	2	3	47
Phoenix Arms (still in business)	1	2	5	23
Bryco Arms (ceased production in 2003)	2	2	2	64
Jennings Firearms (closed in 1991)	0	1	1	19

**CHART C: DECLINE IN RECOVERY OF “SATURDAY NIGHT SPECIALS” AND INCREASE IN RECOVERY OF GHOST GUNS (2012-2022)**

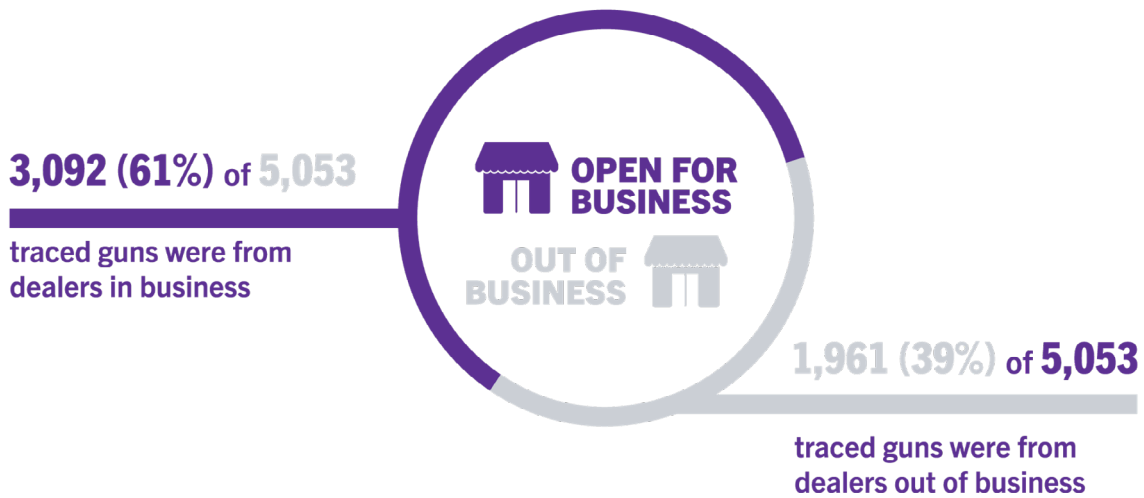


Rochester (guns that can be purchased without a background check, which are discussed in the next section).

Several of these junk handgun manufacturers have been held accountable and driven out of business for the damage caused by their reckless manufacturing practices.

Because guns are durable goods, they can have a longer lifespan than the store from which they were purchased. In fact, of the 5,053 crime guns in the dataset traced to a dealer, 39% were traced to an original sale by a dealer who is no longer in business, as shown in Chart D.<sup>22</sup>

## CHART D: SIGNIFICANT PORTION OF TRACED GUNS WERE SOLD BY DEALERS NOW CLOSED (2012-2022)



### GHOST GUNS

Ghost guns are unserialized and untraceable firearms that can be bought online in parts or “kits” and easily assembled at home. These parts consist of an “80% lower receiver,” which refers to a part of a gun that has not yet reached the stage of manufacture that sellers of ghost guns consider to be a firearm, plus the remaining gun components. They are often sold as “ghost gun kits,” which include all of the parts, and sometimes the equipment, necessary to build a fully functioning firearm at home. Before ATF’s Rule 2021R-05F (ATF’s “ghost gun rule”) went into effect in 2022, these kits were widely available at gun shops, gun shows, and online, and were often purchased by anyone — including prohibited purchasers, domestic abusers, and gun traffickers — without a background check. Because they are not serialized, they are untraceable, and therefore they usually do not show up in trace data. ATF’s “ghost gun rule” is meant to address these issues by clarifying

the agency’s definition of “firearm” to include these parts and kits, meaning such items must be subject to the same federal regulations as traditional firearms.

The Rochester gun trace dataset includes 258 guns for which the manufacturer is listed as “unknown.” Just seven of these guns were traced to a dealer; most appear to be foreign-made, antiques, in poor condition, or otherwise unable to be traced. Another 102 guns listed “Polymer80” as the manufacturer. Polymer80 recoveries have seen exponential growth between 2020 and 2022. Prior to 2020, only three Polymer80 weapons were recovered in crimes in Rochester. In 2020, ten were recovered; in 2021 and 2022, this number further increased to 36 and 53, respectively.

## V. FINDINGS: FIREARMS DEALERS AND INDICATORS OF GUN TRAFFICKING

In the Rochester gun trace database, 2,193 gun dealers are identified. These dealers account for 5,053 traces. The largest number of guns attributable to a single dealer is 193, while 1,698 dealers had only one gun traced to them. The average number of traced guns per dealer in the data is 2.3; the median is one.

### SOURCES OF CRIME GUNS

Rochester’s gun trace data is consistent with past findings about national trace data which have indicated that a small percentage of dealers is the source of the majority of crime guns. In Rochester, 55% of the crime guns in the dataset were traced to just 10% of the dealers.

As shown in **Redacted** and **Redacted** while most crime guns come from out-of-state dealers overall, two-thirds of crime guns from the top 30 dealers come from dealers based in New York state and most from Monroe County dealers. Indeed, as seen in **Redacted** only two of the 20 dealers that sold more than 20 crime guns are from out of state.

## CASE STUDY:

### THE IMPORTANCE OF GUN DEALER SECURITY MEASURES

Chinappi’s Firearms and Supplies is a case study in the importance of gun dealers adopting strong security measures. Chinappi’s — **Redacted**

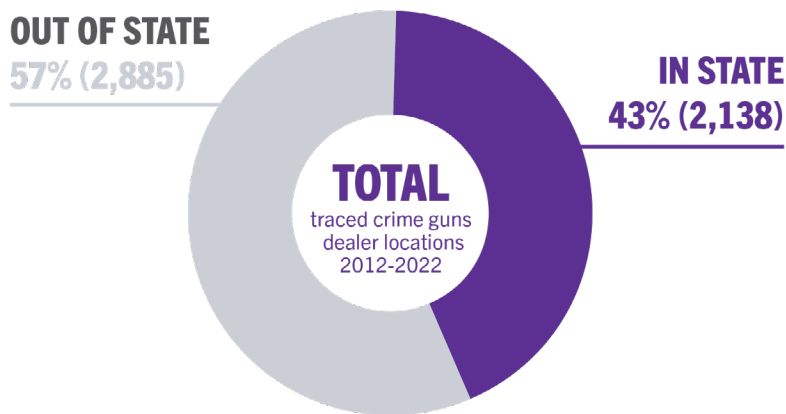
**Redacted**

**Redacted**

— was reportedly a victim of theft seven times from 2007 to 2018,<sup>23</sup> with over 100 firearms stolen.<sup>24</sup> Local law enforcement attempted to work with the store for more than a decade, providing recommendations on how to improve security, but not a single suggestion appeared to have been adopted.<sup>25</sup> After Chinappi’s was burglarized in February 2018, ATF investigators noted that the store did not have a single security camera.<sup>26</sup> This lack of security measures left other gun dealers aghast, with one stating that “cameras and a security system are an absolute must” — the “absolute minimum of what every firearms dealer should have.”<sup>27</sup> As a result of the store’s refusal to secure its firearms and ammunition, and after a particularly egregious theft of more than 80 guns in August 2018, the Monroe County Sheriff’s Office took the “unprecedented step” of petitioning a local judge to issue a court order to temporarily shut down the business and take control of its inventory.<sup>28</sup> The judge granted the request, closing the store through a cease and desist business order.<sup>29</sup> The store no longer has a federal firearms license.<sup>30</sup>

Redacted

**CHART E.1: MOST CRIME GUNS RECOVERED IN THE CITY OF ROCHESTER WERE TRACED TO OUT-OF-STATE DEALERS (2012-2022)**



**CHART E.2: GUN DEALERS IN MONROE COUNTY SUPPLY MOST CRIME GUNS AMONG TOP 30 DEALERS (2012-2022)**



### CURRENT SOURCE DEALERS OF GUNS USED IN HOMICIDES

As noted in **Table 1**, most of the crime guns in the database are not associated with violent crime. Of the 6,036 crime guns in the dataset, 357 were recovered during an investigation into a violent crime. Of these, 47 are associated with a homicide. While the number of homicides is low compared to the total number of traces, it is important to remember that each homicide is a life lost and

a family left behind. To focus again on current dealers' contributions to the problem, **Redacted**  
**Redacted**  
**Redacted**  
**Redacted** are associated with more than one homicide trace. Remember, to have multiple crime guns traced to a dealer in one year is rare. Multiple homicide traces to a single dealer is a strong indicator that the dealer is not doing enough to prevent the store's contribution to gun crime.

# Redacted

## VI. FINDINGS: DEALERS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE MOST TRACES

Redacted lists the 20 gun dealers located in New York that appear most often in the dataset, having sold 17% of the recovered guns. Two-thirds of these stores are closed or no longer selling firearms. The majority are independent dealers, but several are part of the large national Redacted chains.

### DEALERS CURRENTLY CONTRIBUTING TO THE CRIME GUN PROBLEM

Of the 3,596 crime guns traced by Rochester police to dealers that include time-to-crime information in the database, 1,028, or 29%, were recovered within three years of their first retail sale. As explained in the introduction, these short “time-to-crime” (TTC) guns are more likely to have been bought in a straw purchase or for the purpose of trafficking than guns with a longer TTC. Like crime gun traces overall, only a small percentage of dealers account for the

majority of short TTC guns. There were 508 dealers with at least one short TTC gun traced; of these 508, just 21 dealers accounted for 40% – 409 – of the short TTC crime guns.

Table 7 shows the dealers with the highest likelihood of currently contributing to gun trafficking — in other words, those with the largest number of short TTC guns recovered from 2020 to 2022. The 488 crime guns recovered from 2020 to 2022 with a TTC of three years or less were sold by 288 dealers (13% of all dealers in the dataset), and the 223 crime guns recovered from 2020 to 2022 with a TTC of under a year were sold by 138 dealers. In other words, just 6% of the dealers in the entire dataset were the source of all crime guns recovered in less than one year after first sale between 2020 and 2022.

# Redacted

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# RECOMMENDATIONS

**Other jurisdictions should follow Rochester’s lead in creating trace reports.** We applaud our partners in the Rochester Office of the Mayor, Rochester City Council, and Rochester Police Department for providing their city’s gun trace data and for their commitment to generating this report. The decision to be more transparent about where crime guns are coming from is one that every jurisdiction should consider. Equipped with trace data information in their jurisdictions, communities, elected officials, and law enforcement can advocate for and implement informed gun violence reduction strategies, hold the gun industry accountable, and save lives.

**Researchers and journalists should build upon this analysis.** Open gun tracing information gives the public a better understanding of the supply side of the gun violence equation. This information can be further leveraged by journalists and researchers to give the public an even better understanding of gun trafficking patterns and indicators. Journalists can build upon this data by investigating problematic crime gun dealers in their area and guns that are later recovered in crime. When covering gun crime, journalists should also include information about the sources of crime guns and the ways in which these guns are acquired. This data can also be used by researchers to study the sources and paths of crime guns more in-depth to fully understand gun trafficking patterns and indicators in certain areas. Such research would provide a broader base of evidence from which lawmakers, law enforcement, and communities could develop effective solutions to gun violence.

**Federal, state, and local law enforcement should use trace data to inform enforcement and oversight strategies for upstream sources of crime guns.** Law enforcement agencies must work collaboratively across jurisdictions to ensure that licensed gun dealers are responsibly selling firearms to the public. Focusing on the largest dealers of crime guns with a short average time-to-crime is an efficient and effective approach to preventing future gun injuries and deaths. The New York State Police — and all law enforcement with gun dealer inspection authority — should use trace data to prioritize compliance inspections for the small number of dealers responsible for most crime guns. Only by using all tools, including data, at their disposal can law enforcement agencies best disincentivize irresponsible firearm sales and reduce gun trafficking and crime.

**State and local elected officials in New York state and the city of Rochester should use these findings as motivation to consider ways in which they can better regulate problematic gun dealers and enforce the law.** State lawmakers should continue to adopt policies that allow for better oversight and more effective enforcement of gun industry businesses that supply the criminal market. New York already has laws and regulations in place that offer ways to hold gun dealers accountable, including state inspections<sup>53</sup> and nuisance laws.<sup>54</sup> Considering the unusually high rate of Rochester crime guns coming from Rochester itself (compared to the state average), the city should partner with ATF and state agencies to ensure firearms regulations and laws are being appropriately enforced. At a minimum, the state government and all local governments should ensure their firearm procurements incentivize better business practices for gun dealers; dealers

who supply a disproportionate number of crime guns should not be eligible for taxpayer-funded purchases.

Gun dealers should adopt **Brady's Gun Dealer Code of Conduct to avoid risky transfers and supplying the criminal market**. The Brady Gun Dealer Code of Conduct contains best practices for the safe transfer of firearms to the public. Many responsible gun dealers already follow a number of the policies included in the Code of Conduct.

## **SUPRA NOTES**



**Redacted**

# ENDNOTES

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