

OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
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Firearms Used in the Commission of Crimes 2024

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<http://oag.ca.gov/publications#crime>



Division of Law Enforcement
Bureau of Forensic Services

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

California Penal Code section 34200 requires the California 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.

Scope of Report

The 2024 Firearms Used in the Commission of Crimes report consists of data from DOJ's 10 regional crime laboratories,¹ which principally serve the rural areas of California. DOJ's 10 regional labs provide service to counties that represent roughly a quarter of the population of California. Although the Penal Code provides that this annual report include data from both state and local crime laboratories, there is no statutory mandate for local crime laboratories to track or provide this data to DOJ. As a result, DOJ historically has not received such data from local laboratories. Accordingly, the data in this report may not be representative of gun-use trends within urban areas or within California as a whole.

Reporting Requirement

Section 34200 requires the report to include 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 violent² 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 such as 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.

¹ A map of DOJ's 10 regional laboratories (Central Valley, Chico, Eureka, Freedom, Fresno, Redding, Riverside, Sacramento, Santa Barbara, and Santa Rosa) and the counties served by each is available at <https://oag.ca.gov/bfs/services>.

² Violent felonies are defined in Penal Code section 667.5

REPORT

The 10 regional crime laboratories operated by DOJ's Bureau of Forensic Services (BFS) completed 513 requests for analysis during the 2024 calendar year. However, this report only contains analysis on firearms confirmed by forensic testing to have been used in the commission of a violent crime, as defined by Penal Code section 667.5. Out of the 513 requests DOJ received in 2024, 151 firearms qualified for inclusion in this report.

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 that was 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 151 qualifying firearms examined³ by DOJ laboratories during this reporting period included 139 handguns (92%), seven rifles (5%), four shotguns (3%), and one machine gun (<1%) (Figure 1). Three of the handguns were fully automatic, and 10 of the 151 qualifying firearms were California assault weapons⁴.

The most commonly encountered calibers were 9 mm Luger (S&W), followed by 40 Smith & Wesson and 45 ACP (Figure 2).

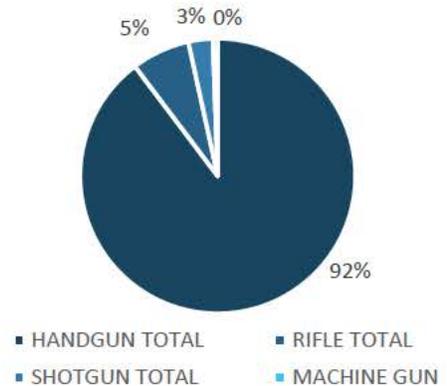


Figure 1. Types of firearms used in crimes.

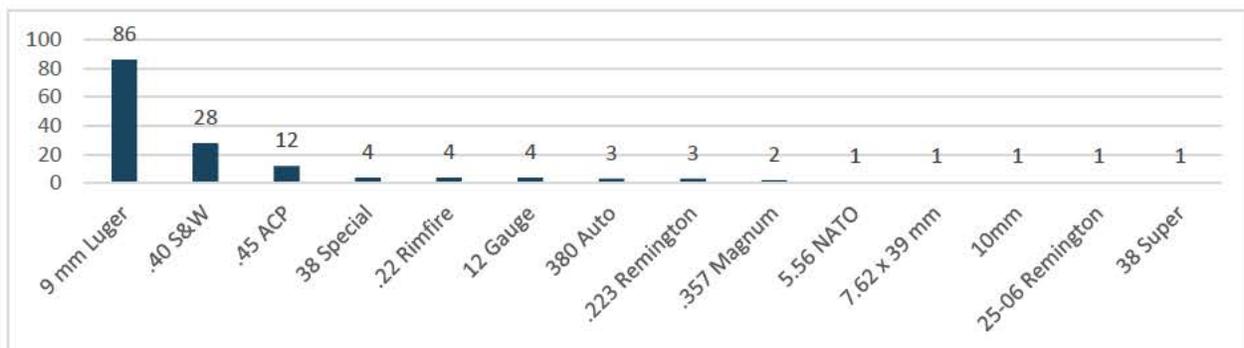


Figure 2. Calibers of ammunition used in crimes.

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.

Firearms Used in Crimes of Violence Other than Homicides

Seventy-six of the 151 (50.3%) qualifying firearms examined by DOJ laboratories were submitted in cases involving crimes of violence other than homicides. These 76 firearms included 71 handguns (93%), two rifles (3%), two shotguns (3%), and one machine gun (1%) (Figure 3). One of the rifles was a California assault weapon. The firearms examined in this category did not include any fully automatic firearms.

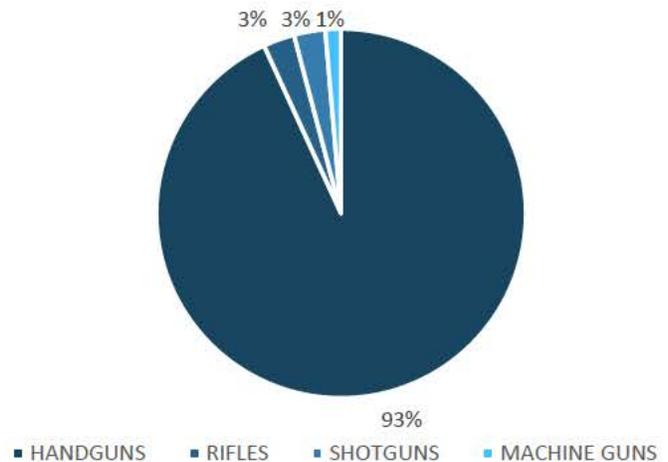


Figure 3. Firearms used in crimes of violence other than homicides.

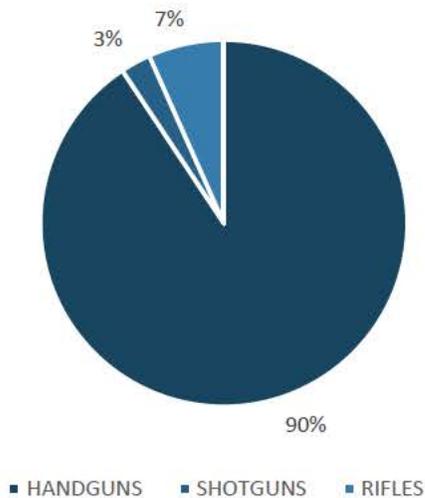


Figure 4. Firearms used in homicides.

Firearms Used in Homicides

Of the 151 qualifying firearms examined during this reporting period, 75 (49.7%) were submitted to DOJ laboratories in homicide cases. These 75 firearms included 68 handguns (91%), five rifles (7%), and two shotguns (3%) (Figure 4).

Three of the handguns, three of the rifles, one of which was a short-barreled rifle, and one of the shotguns were California assault weapons. Another three of the handguns linked to homicides were fully automatic.

Firearms Without Serial Numbers

Fifty-five of the 151 qualifying firearms (36%) were submitted without serial numbers (Figure 5). Fifty-one of the 55 firearms (93%) were handguns and four (7%) were rifles (Figure 5). Five were used in crimes of violence other than homicide, four were used in homicides, and two were used in officer-involved shootings.

Three of the handguns and three of the rifles were California assault weapons, and another three of the handguns were semi-automatic handguns that had been converted to exhibit fully automatic firing.

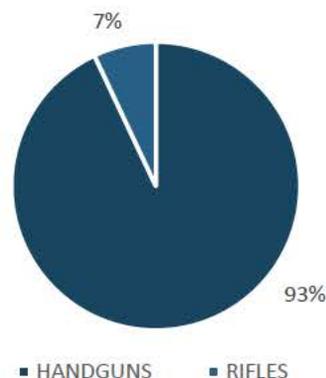


Figure 5. No serial numbers present.

Forty-six of the handguns without serial numbers were what are commonly referred to as “ghost” guns: Polymer 80-type firearms, which are typically marketed in an unfinished state and require additional machining and parts to produce a functional firearm, or 3-D printed. Nine of the 55 firearms submitted without serial numbers were traditionally manufactured firearms that had their serial numbers obliterated or removed.

Weapons Examined by Year

The number of California assault weapons examined by DOJ laboratories was higher in 2024 than in 2023; however, 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 DOJ’s website at <https://www.oag.ca.gov/ogvp/fed-assault-weapons-ban>.

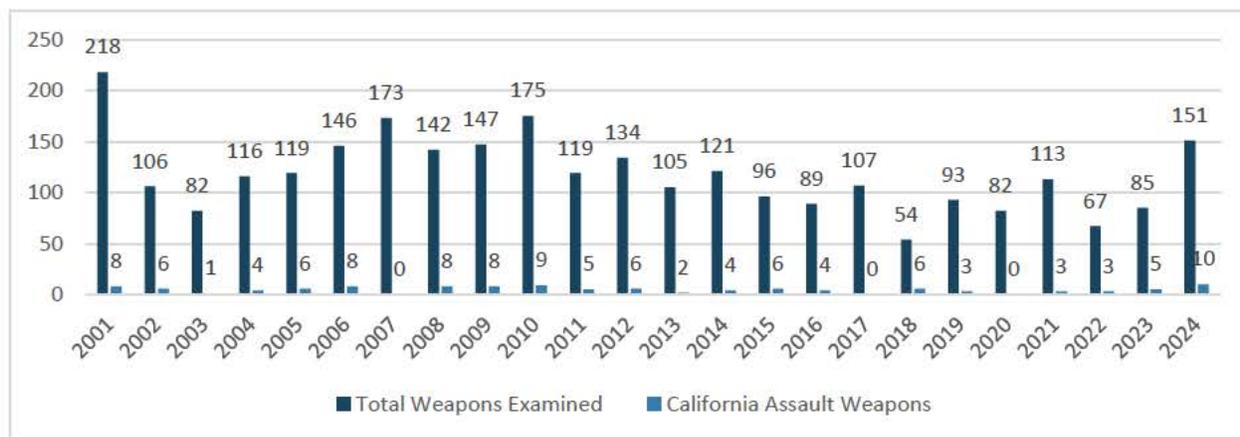


Figure 6. Weapons examined by year.

Trends and Special Cases

California Assault Weapons

Ten of the 151 qualifying firearms examined in 2024 were identified as California Assault Weapons (as defined in Pen. Code §§ 30510 and 30515), (see Figure 6 on page 5).

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 Full-Automatic Conversions)

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

Officer-Involved Shooting Incidents

Two qualifying firearms were identified as being related to officer-involved shooting incidents. Both were handguns without serial numbers; neither were California assault weapons.

Short-Barreled Shotguns or Rifles

One of the examined firearms was classified as a short-barreled rifle.

Stolen Firearms

Two of the examined firearms were confirmed to have been reported stolen. Additional firearms may have been 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 a street gang crime.

Suppressors

One qualifying firearm equipped with a suppressor (silencer) was examined in 2024.

Unusual Ammunition

There was one report of frangible⁵ ammunition. There were no reported examinations of armor-piercing, exploding, Glazer-type, incendiary, 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.