



Department of Justice

Office of Justice Programs



***FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 9, 2019, 2:00 P.M. ET

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BUREAU OF JUSTICE STATISTICS

CONTACT: TANNYR WATKINS

(202) 532-3923; Tannyr.M.Watkins@ojp.usdoj.gov

1 IN 5 PRISONERS POSSESSED A GUN DURING THEIR CRIME; 9 IN 10 DID NOT GET IT FROM A RETAIL SOURCE

WASHINGTON — Based on the 2016 Survey of Prison Inmates, about 1 in 5 (21 percent) of all state and federal prisoners said they possessed or carried a firearm when they committed the offense for which they were serving time, the Bureau of Justice Statistics announced today. Among prisoners who possessed a gun during their offense, 9 in 10 (90 percent) had not obtained it from a retail source.

More than half of prisoners who possessed a gun during their offense had obtained it off the street, acquired it from the underground market, stolen it or found it at the scene of the crime. A quarter had obtained it from a family member or friend, or as a gift. Less than 1 percent (0.8 percent) had obtained it at a gun show.

An estimated 13 percent of prisoners used a firearm by showing, pointing or firing it during their crime. About 1.3 percent of all prisoners obtained a firearm from a retail source and used it during their crime.

Overall, an estimated 287,400 prisoners possessed a firearm during their offense. About 29 percent of state and 36 percent of federal prisoners serving time for a violent offense said they had possessed or carried a firearm during the offense. Violent offenders were much more likely to have possessed a firearm during the offense than property (less than 5 percent) or drug (less than 15 percent) offenders.

Among state prisoners who possessed a gun during their offense, 27 percent killed someone with it, 12 percent injured someone with it but did not kill anyone, 7 percent fired it but did not injure anyone, 22 percent showed or pointed it but did not fire it and 32 percent did not use it.

Eighteen percent of both state and federal prisoners possessed handguns during their crime, and 11 percent of all prisoners used a handgun during their crime. About 1.5 percent had a rifle and about 1.6 percent had a shotgun. About 20 percent of state and federal prisoners who possessed a firearm during their offense obtained it with the intent to use it during their crime.

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Among state and federal prisoners, males were more likely than females to have possessed a firearm during their crime. Whites and Hispanics were less likely to have possessed a firearm during their crime than blacks. In general, the likelihood of having possessed a firearm during a crime decreased with age. Among state prisoners, those who had served in the military were less likely to have possessed a gun during their offense than those who had not served in the military.

The report, *Source and Use of Firearms Involved in Crimes: Survey of Prison Inmates, 2016* (NCJ 251776), was written by BJS statisticians Mariel Alper and Lauren Glaze. This is the first report from the 2016 Survey of Prison Inmates (SPI), a large-scale survey of about 25,000 state or federal inmates. The report, related documents and additional information about BJS's statistical publications and programs can be found on the BJS website at www.bjs.gov.

The Bureau of Justice Statistics of the U.S. Department of Justice is the principal federal agency responsible for collecting, analyzing and disseminating reliable statistics on crime and criminal justice in the United States. Jeffrey H. Anderson is the director.

The Office of Justice Programs, led by Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General Matt M. Dummermuth, provides federal leadership in developing the nation's capacity to prevent and control crime, administer justice and assist victims. OJP has six bureaus and offices: the Bureau of Justice Assistance; the Bureau of Justice Statistics; the National Institute of Justice; the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention; the Office for Victims of Crime; and the Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering and Tracking. More information about OJP and its components can be found at www.ojp.gov.

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