

Based on the 2016 Survey of Prison Inmates, about 1 in 5 (21%) of all state and federal prisoners possessed or carried a firearm when they committed the offense for which they were serving time. Handguns were the most common type of firearm possessed by state and federal prisoners during their offense (18%), and 11% of all prisoners used a handgun during their offense. Less than 2% of all prisoners obtained a firearm from a retail source and possessed (1.9%) or used (1.3%) it during their crime.

Controlling-offense characteristics

About 29% of state and 36% of federal prisoners serving time for a violent offense said they possessed or carried a firearm during the offense. Violent offenders were much more likely to have possessed a firearm during the offense than property (5% state, 3% federal) or drug (8% state, 12% federal) offenders.

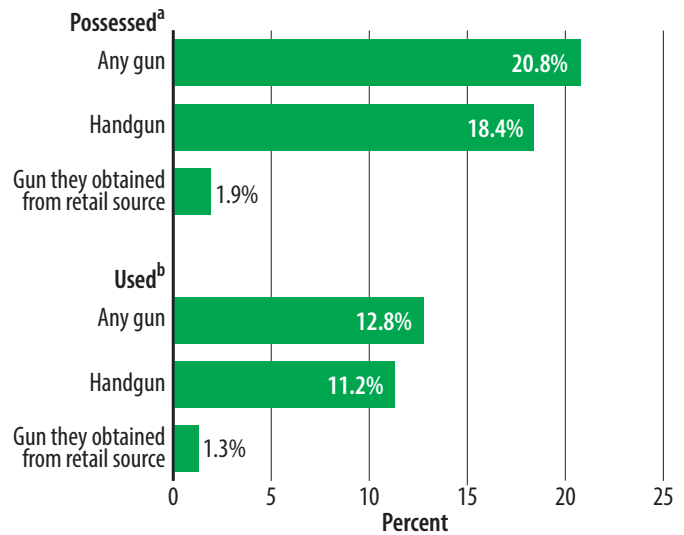
Source of firearms

Overall, an estimated 287,400 prisoners possessed a firearm during their offense. Among prisoners who possessed a gun during their offense, 90% did not obtain it from a retail source. More than half (56%) of prisoners who possessed a firearm during their offense had either stolen it (6%), found it at the scene of the crime (7%), or obtained it off the street or from the underground market (43%). Fewer than 1% had obtained the firearm at a gun show (0.8%).

Demographic characteristics

In state prisons, males were about 2.5 times as likely (22%) as females (9%) to have possessed a firearm during the crime for which they were imprisoned. In federal prisons, males (21%) were about three times as likely as females (7%) to have possessed a firearm during their crime. Among all prisoners, blacks (29% state, 29% federal) were more likely than whites (12% state, 17% federal) and Hispanics (21% state, 13% federal) to have possessed a firearm during their crime.

Percent of all state and federal prisoners who had possessed or used a firearm during their offense, 2016



^aIncludes prisoners who carried or possessed a firearm during the offense.

^bIncludes prisoners who showed, pointed, or discharged a firearm during the offense.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, Survey of Prison Inmates, 2016.

In general, the likelihood of state and federal prisoners having possessed a firearm during their crime decreased with age. Firearm possession was highest among inmates ages 18 to 24 in both state (32%) and federal (30%) prisons. State prisoners with no military service were more likely to have possessed a gun during their offense (21%) than those who had served in the military (16%).

Use of firearms during crimes

About 1 in 5 state and federal prisoners who possessed a firearm during their offense obtained it with the intent to use it during the crime. Among state prisoners who possessed a gun during their offense, 27% killed someone with it, another 12% injured someone with it, 7% fired it but did not injure anyone, 22% showed or pointed it but did not fire it, and 32% did not use it.

The full report (*Source and Use of Firearms Involved in Crimes: Survey of Prison Inmates, 2016*, NCJ 251776), related documents, and additional information about the Bureau of Justice Statistics can be found at www.bjs.gov.