



SASKATOON _____
POLICE SERVICE

TO: Jo Custead, Chairperson
Board of Police Commissioners

FROM: Troy Cooper
Office of the Chief

DATE: 2022 February 02

SUBJECT: 2021/22 Firearms Report

FILE #: 2,005

ISSUE:

The investigation of gun crime is a fundamental component of the Saskatoon Police Service (SPS) strategic plan and forms part of our mission to protect and serve the community.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the report be received as information.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY:

Goal 1 - Develop and implement effective prevention, intervention and suppression strategies to combat the changing facets of crime and its causes.

Strategy 1.2 - Ensure that the SPS's response to violent crime is appropriate and effective.

Activity – Adopt and implement a specific gun crime strategy for the Saskatoon Police Service, which includes:

- Identification of stakeholders;
- Establishing a formal understanding and reinforcing policy;
- Collecting firearm and related evidence;
- Transferring evidence;
- Assessing and evaluating evidence.

DISCUSSION:

Please refer to the attached 2021 Firearms Report for details.

CONCLUSION:

The Saskatoon Police Service will continue to invest the necessary time and effort to develop and enhance a locally focused presumptive approach to the investigation of crime involving the use of firearms. A gun crime strategy for Saskatoon will focus on comprehensiveness, coordination and community cooperation in attempts to meet the following objectives:


Keeping Communities Safe by improving public understanding about the risks of gun violence, working with community leaders, and reducing easy access to firearms, especially for at-risk individuals.

Preventing and Solving Gun Crime by stopping the flow of illegal guns, sharing information among jurisdictions, and training officers to respond to gun crimes, including tracing all guns.

Keeping Police Officers Safe by reducing the firepower available to criminals, providing protective technologies, and improving training and support for officers in handling guns and situations involving guns and their aftermath.

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Deputy Chief, Operations

Submitted by: 

Troy Cooper
Chief of Police

Dated: February 4, 2022

(attachment – 2021/22 Firearms Report)

**CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIONS DIVISION
FIREARMS REPORT – 2021/22**

February 2, 2022



SASKATOON _____
POLICE SERVICE
BE THE DIFFERENCE

FORWARD

The Saskatoon Police Service (SPS) is committed to the development of effective prevention, intervention and suppression strategies to combat the changing facets of crime in our community. Gun violence is usually categorized according to the most severe of circumstances, that being a homicide. However, local and provincial trends are quick to acknowledge the occurrence of firearms in a variety of situations including robberies, assaults, domestic violence, drive-by shootings and suicides. Additional challenges for the Saskatoon Police Service in the fight to curb illegal firearm activity stems from gang involvement, traffickers, and people who are prohibited from possessing firearms.

A swift and responsive approach to gun violence is an essential core component of policing operations and is directly proportional to public safety; however, it is not enough to remain strictly reactive in nature. The Saskatoon Police Service will continue to explore data-driven initiatives as part of a multifaceted approach to gun violence in our community. We are committed to joint firearms enforcement programs involving municipal, provincial and federal agencies such as the Saskatchewan Firearms Program, RCMP (Crime Reduction Teams) and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF).

The Saskatoon Police Service - Criminal Investigations Division respectfully submits the 2021/22 Firearms Report for the City of Saskatoon.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Saskatoon Police Service is committed to the reduction of gun crime and the associated harm it creates in our community. The Street Crime Section has been responsible for leading the charge when it comes to investigations involving firearm related activity. The focus is specifically on street gangs, criminal organizations, drug trafficking organizations and individuals who are involved in crime gun activity.

In an attempt to assess the scope and nature of gun crime activity in Saskatoon, investigative units such as the Guns and Gangs Unit and Crime Reduction Team seek to explain the following:

- How is gun violence occurring (random or trends);
 - When and where does gun violence occur;
 - Why does gun violence occur/continue to occur in Saskatoon;
 - What countermeasures can be attained to curb gun violence?
-

Capturing and analyzing evidence-based data goes hand in hand with specific enforcement action to ensure competent and thorough investigations related to shootings, illegal possession, use, altering, importation, trafficking and manufacturing of firearms are completed.

The Street Crime Section coordinates its investigations with the RCMP National Weapons Enforcement Team (NWEST), Saskatchewan Chief Firearms Officer and other police agencies within the province of Saskatchewan.

This report is broken down into the following categories:

1. Firearms Related Occurrences (# of occurrences where a firearm is present)
2. Firearm Impact Analysis - Community (how are firearms being used?)
3. Firearm Discharge Locations
4. Firearm Seizures
5. Firearm Tracing
6. Enforcement Action

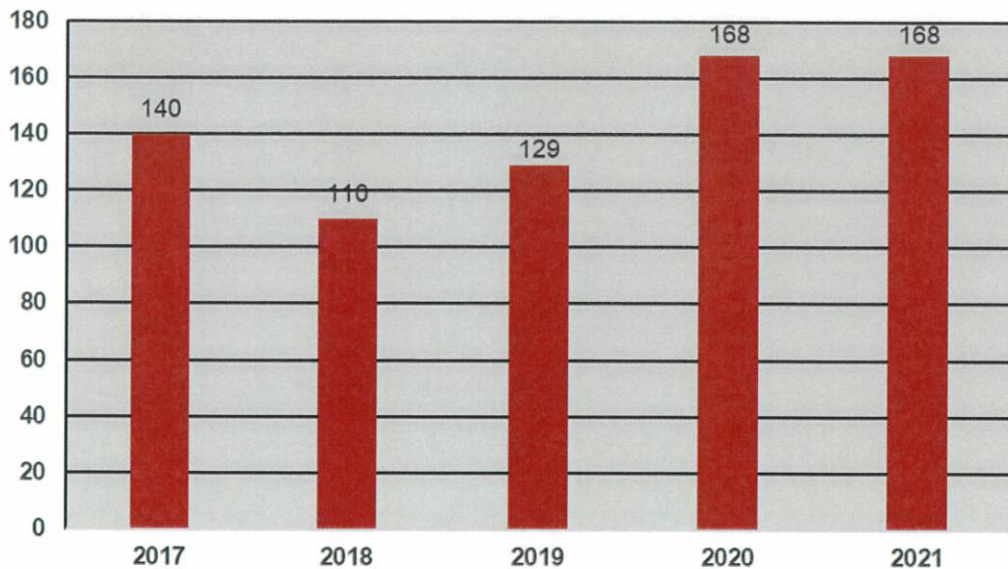
FIREARM RELATED OCCURRENCES

This report refers to occurrences involving firearms. The definition of a “crime gun” will inevitably help provide context while interpreting the data. Canadian law enforcement typically defines a crime gun as any firearm that is:

- Used in a criminal offence;
- Has been obtained, possessed or intended to be used to facilitate criminal activity, or
- Has a removed, altered or obliterated serial number.

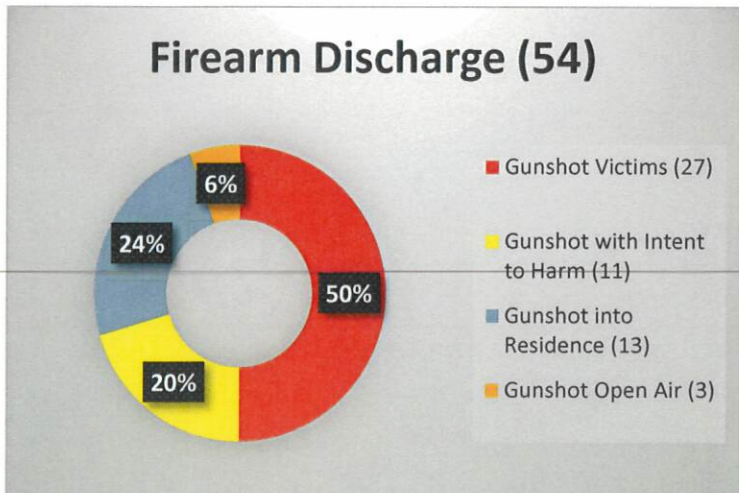
In 2021, the Saskatoon Police Service identified 168 occurrences that involved a firearm. Although this is the same number of occurrences as recorded in the previous year (2020), it continues to represent a 17% increase when compared to the five-year average of 143 occurrences. The rise in firearm related occurrences is consistent with the rest of the country.

Figure 1: Number of Occurrences where the Most Serious Weapon Present was a Firearm, 2017-2021

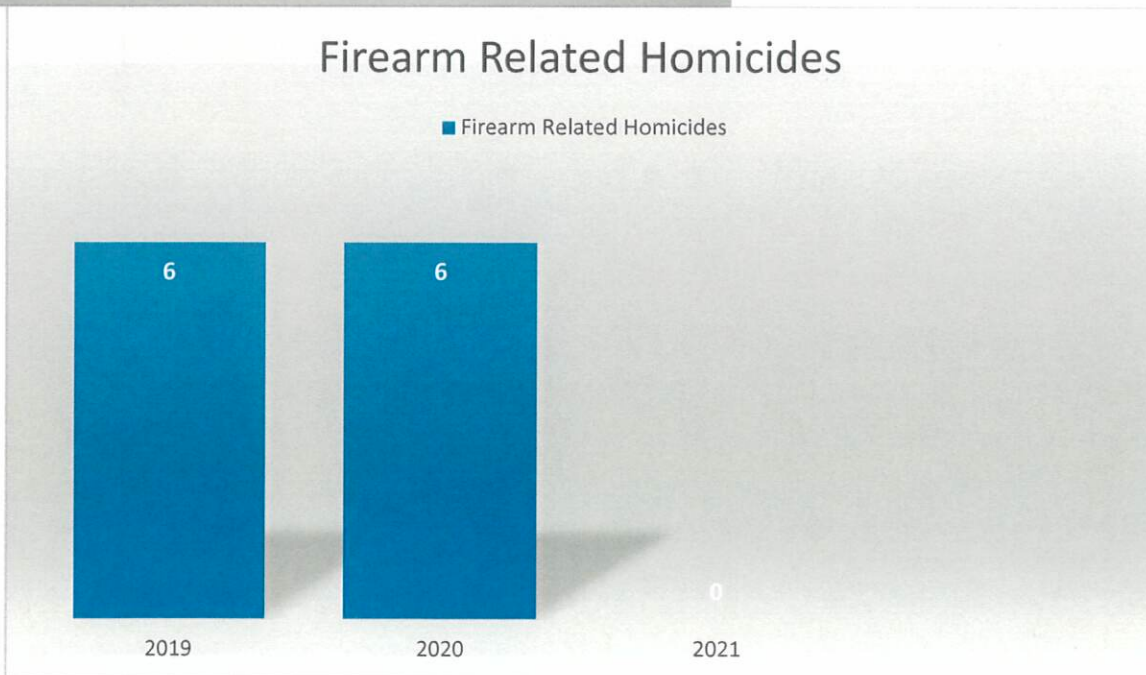


FIREARM IMPACT ANALYSIS – COMMUNITY

The use of crime guns is directly proportional to public safety and the perceptions of public safety within a community. Crimes involving firearms can affect property values, business opportunities and can perpetuate cycles of poverty and inequality. The following charts provide context of where firearms have been discharged, the circumstances surrounding the incident and the type of firearm used.



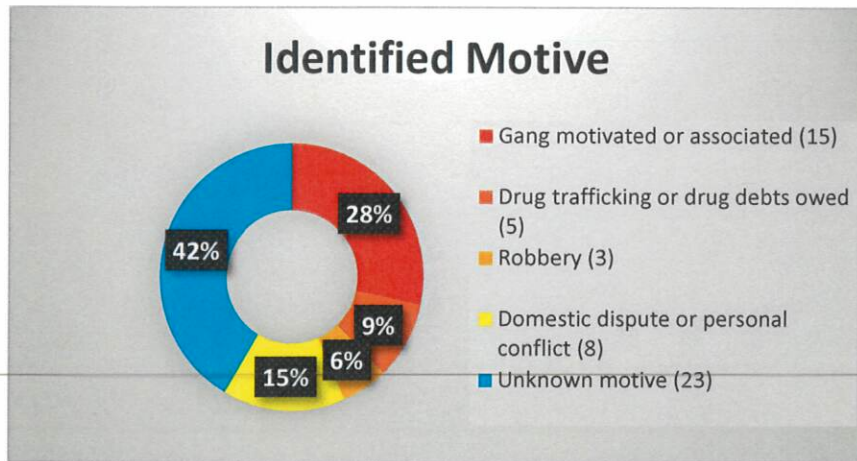
In 2021, the Saskatoon Police Service responded to 54 gunshot incidents. The majority of these incidents (70%) involved victims being shot or being shot at. The remaining incidents (30%) involved a firearm being discharged at a residence, business or confirmed reports of gunshots that were not directed at a specific person or group.



Although there is usually a positive correlation between the number of crime guns and homicides for a community, of the seven (7) homicides in 2021 none of them came as a result of illegal gun activity.

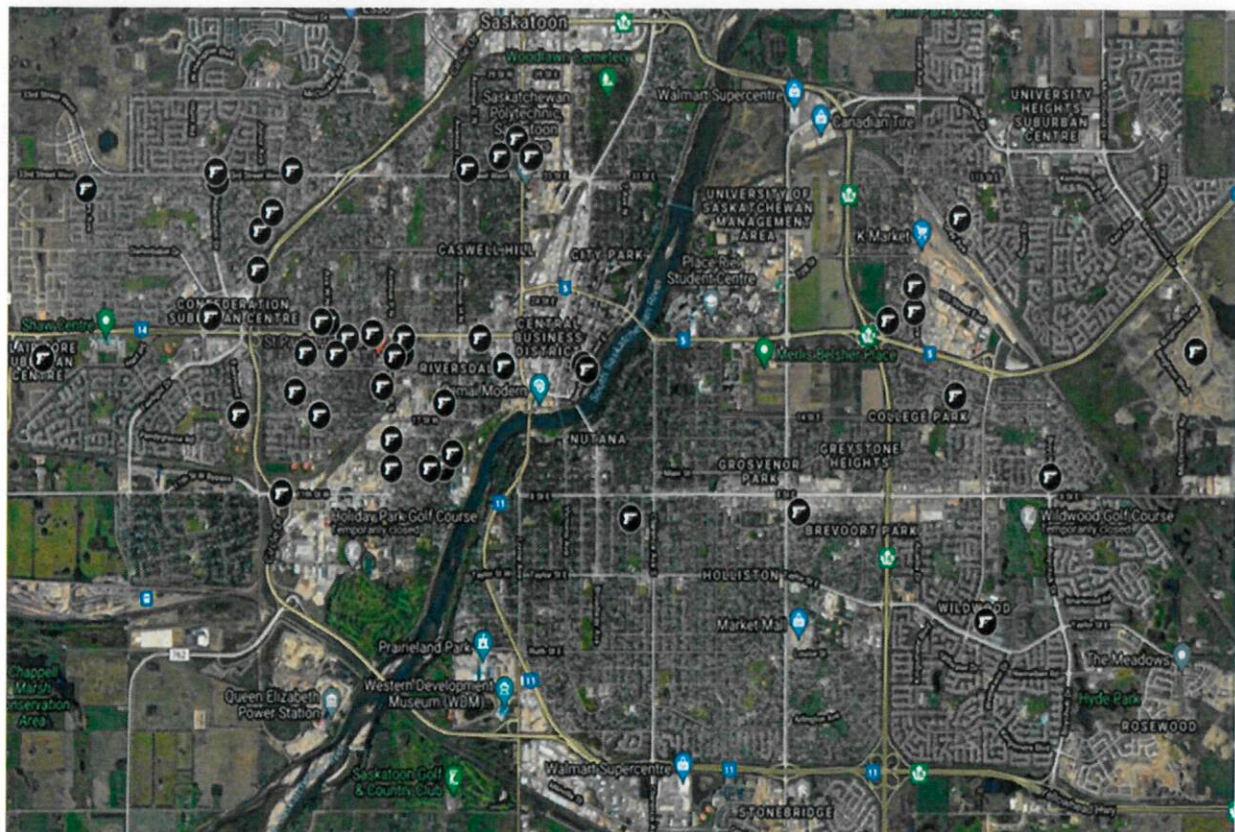
FIREARM DISCHARGE LOCATIONS

Gun crime is not limited to one area or neighborhood of Saskatoon. However there are substantially more events in the Central and Northwest neighborhoods.

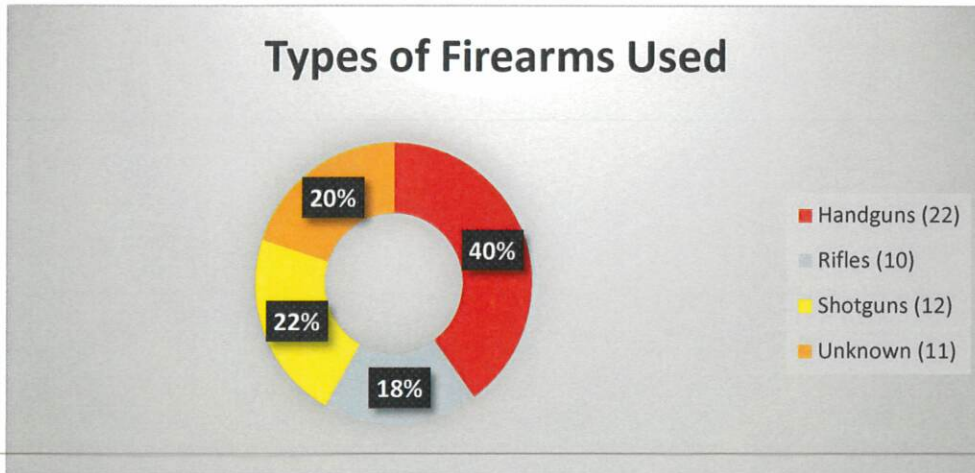


In the majority of cases, the motivation behind a trigger pull is unknown to the police however, incidents involving gang motivation, involvement or association account for 28 percent of our gun crime.

The following map provides a graphic representation of gun activity in the community:



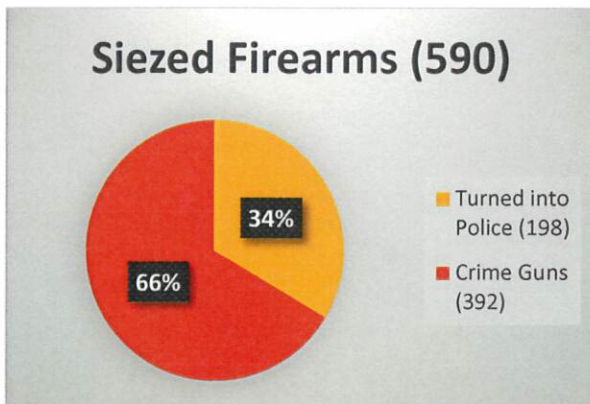
In occurrences where firearms have been discharged the majority of the time it has been attributed to a handgun.



In occurrences where firearms have been discharged the most frequently used caliber is .22 followed by Pellet or Airsoft projectiles.

FIREARM SEIZURES

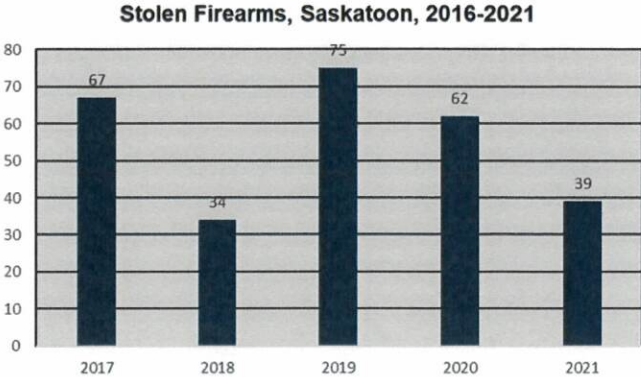
In 2021, the Saskatoon Police Service seized 590 firearms. The majority of the seized firearms (66%) are classified as crime guns. The remaining 33% were firearms that were turned over to the Police Service for destruction and were not associated to any criminal event.



***See appendix "A" for a detailed breakdown of the firearm types.

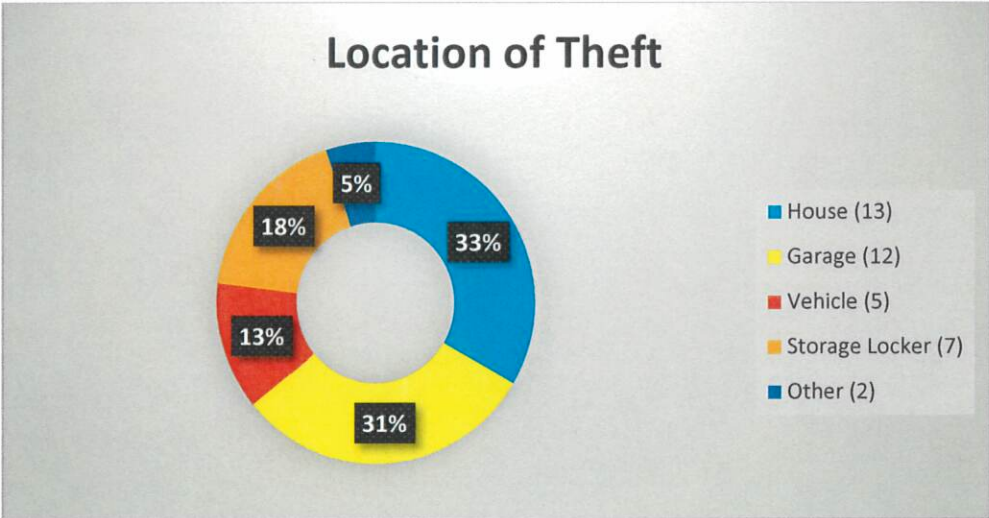
Saskatoon Firearms Thefts

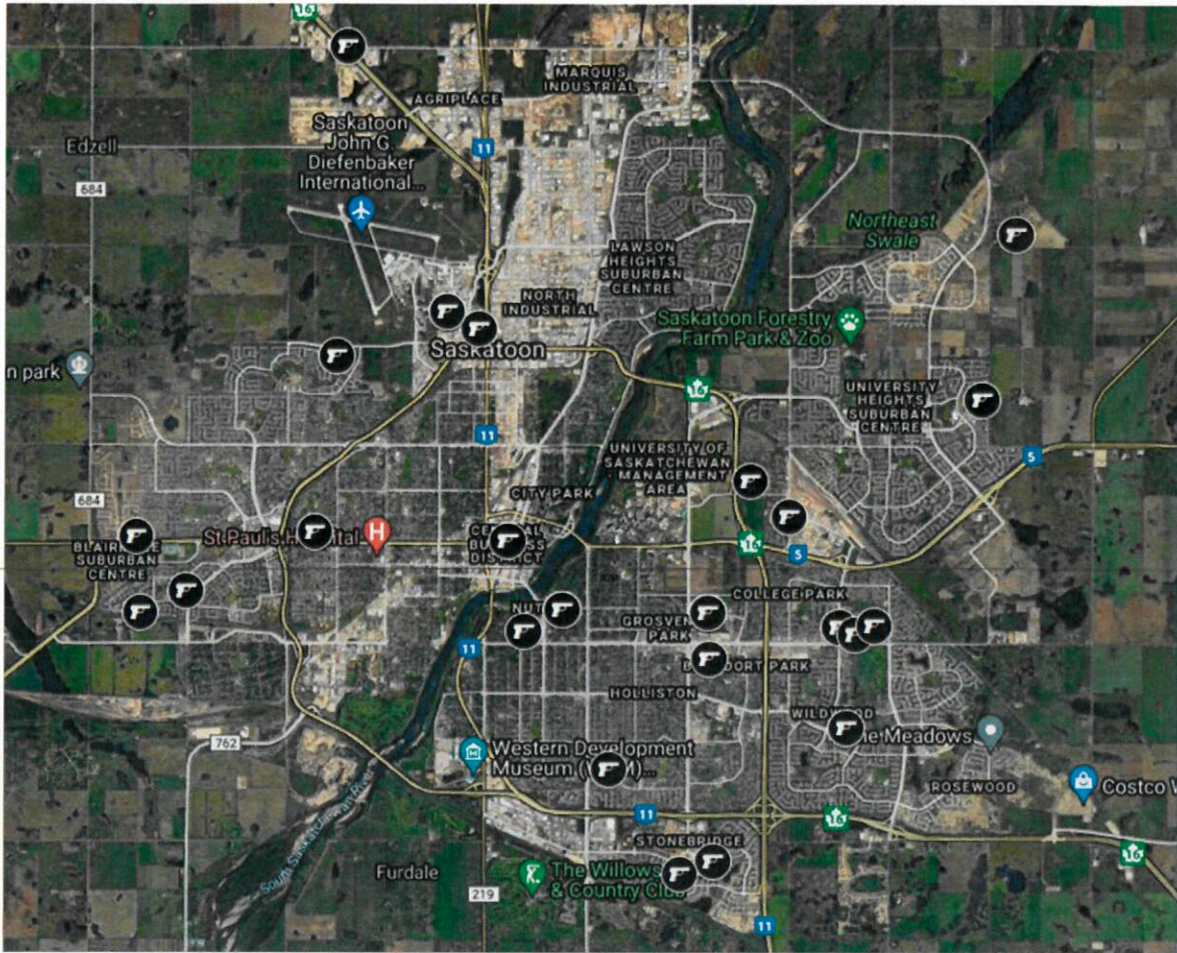
In 2021, the Saskatoon Police Service received 39 reports where firearms were stolen. The number of stolen firearms in 2021 has steadily declined in the last two years from 62 stolen firearms in 2020 and 75 stolen firearms in 2019. With the COVID pandemic and lockdowns, many people remained at home. This is likely reason for the reduced number of thefts since 2019.



Location

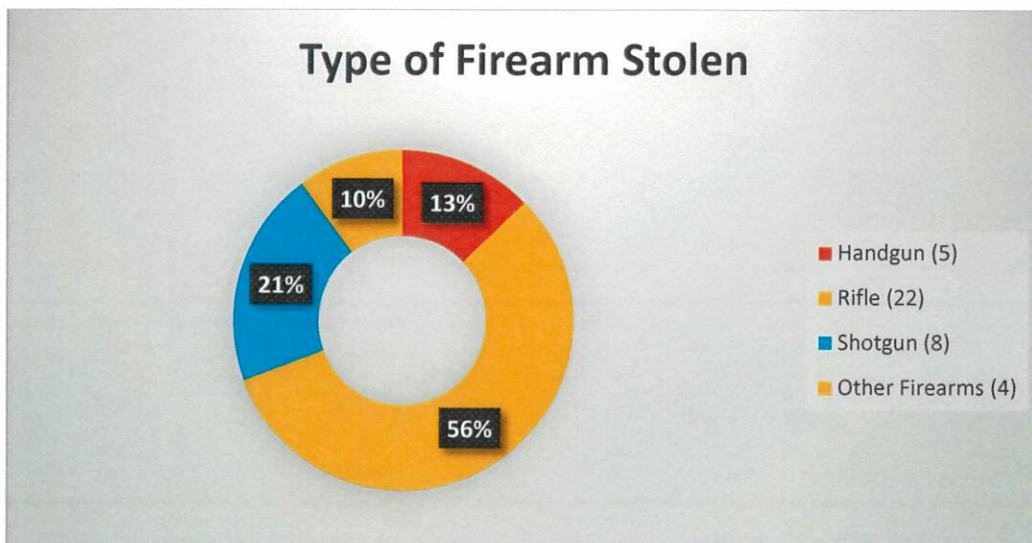
The majority of firearm thefts has occurred from private residences or garages. An analysis of the locations where the thefts have occurred does not appear to have any distinguishable pattern:





Location of stolen firearms in Saskatoon.

The vast majority of stolen firearms were long guns:



Emerging Trends

International concerns about the threats posed by untraceable firearms started to surface for law enforcement approximately five years ago. Commonly referred to as “ghost guns”, local law enforcement has been monitoring the emergence of these firearms in Canada since the availability and capabilities of 3D printing has become readily available to the public.

In 2018, Public Safety Canada acknowledged the emergence of 3D printed guns in the Nation.¹ These trends continue to surface in the province of Saskatchewan, substantiated by several recent occurrences involving 3D printed firearms. On November 21, 2021, a RCMP Crime Reduction Team executed a warrant for 3D printed firearms at a residence in Weyburn, Saskatchewan. Locally, The Saskatoon Police Service Guns and Gangs Unit executed a search warrant for 3D printed firearm(s) and components in January of 2022. The search was successful in obtaining equipment, firearms and parts associated to the production of ghost guns:



¹ Krugel, Lauren, 2018, *Public Safety Canada says printing a gun without a licence could lead to jail time*, CTV News, accessed 28 January, 2022. <https://www.ctvnews.ca/politics/public-safety-canada-says-printing-a-gun-without-licence-could-lead-to-jail-time-1.4035083>

FIREARM TRACING

The process of tracing a firearm can provide the SPS with a census of information regarding recovered crime guns. In addition to crime guns being obtained through local thefts and break and enters, firearms can be trafficked or treated as a commodity and brought into Saskatoon from other cities, provinces or in some cases other countries.

Trace information can potentially assist investigators in identifying patterns of use, diversion or trafficking. Locally, tracing a firearm involves a combination of efforts including submissions to the RCMP National Laboratory for inclusion into the Canadian Integrated Ballistics Identification Network (CIBIN) or through post arrest interviews.

Curbing gun violence takes a balanced approach and requires a variety of applications that account for social issues, economic disparities and improvements to law enforcement practices. A successful crime gun strategy for the Saskatoon Police Service requires the delineation of two critical points:

- Valuable information can be extracted from crime guns and related evidence to assist law enforcement.
- Process and technology is readily available to assist with the production of actionable evidence to assist law enforcement in the solving and prevention of gun related crimes.

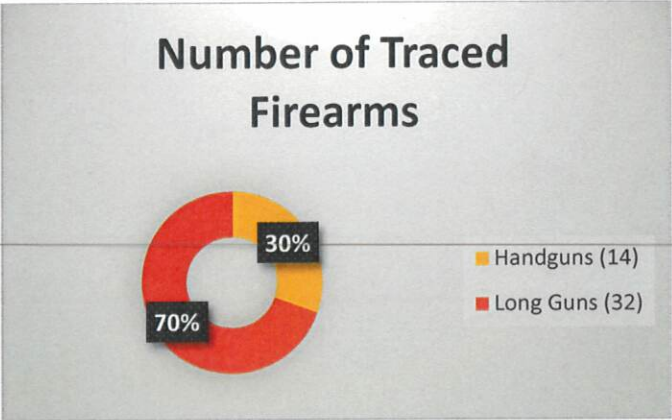
The creation and evolution of ballistic information sharing networks amongst police agencies continues within a global context in an effort to reduce gun related crimes. The National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN) is a national database of digital images of cartridge cases that have been collected from crime scenes or test-fired from confiscated weapons.² In 2006, the United States and Canada began sharing ballistic data between the respective national networks, NIBIN in the United States and the Canadian Integrated Ballistics Identification Network (CIBIN) in Canada.³

The submission of ballistics data into any national, federal or global database requires special equipment in the form of a BrassTrax CIBIN acquisition station. A BrassTrax acquisition station enables entry of cartridge case information onto a ballistic network. On January 19, 2022, the Saskatchewan Association of Chiefs of Police (SACP) gathered to discuss the purchase and implementation of a BrassTrax machine for the Province of Saskatchewan. The SACP is exploring a partnership with the Saskatchewan Firearms Program to purchase a BrassTrax machine and develop a provincial framework to assist with the collection and submission of crime gun data into the CIBIN.

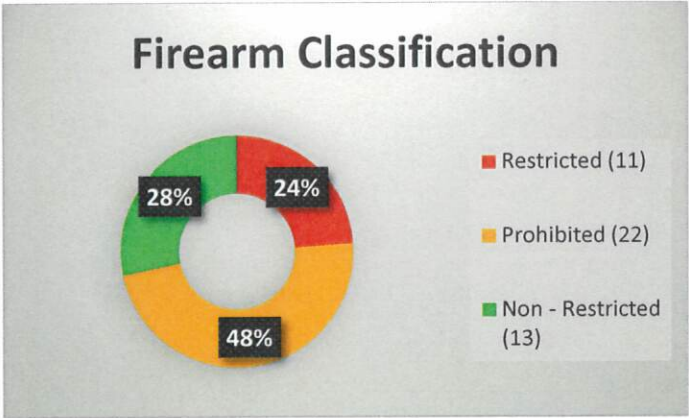
² National Institute of Justice, *Law Enforcement Use of the National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN)*, 2013, <https://nij.gov/topics/lawenforcement/investigations/Pages/nibin.aspx>

³ Gagliardi, Pete. *The 13 Critical Tasks – An inside-out approach to solving more gun crime*. Ultra Electronics Forensic Technology Inc. 2019.

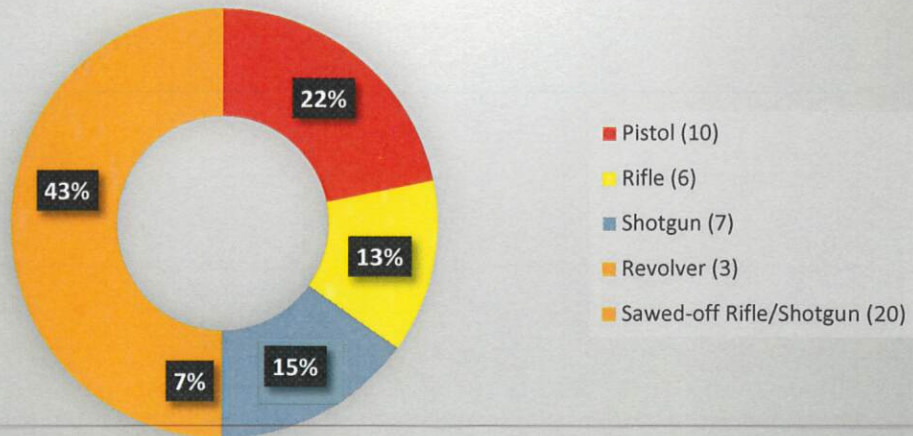
In 2021, 46 crime guns were analyzed (tracing process) as a part of the Saskatoon Police Service gun crime strategy. From those traces, three handguns were successfully traced/associated to illegal firearm related activity in four municipalities between Alberta and British Columbia (Wainright, Edmonton, Calgary, and Vancouver). Crime gun tracing is the one of the primary responsibilities of the Guns and Gangs Unit. They continue to enlist the support and assistance of criminal justice and community stakeholders in collecting and examining gun violence data.



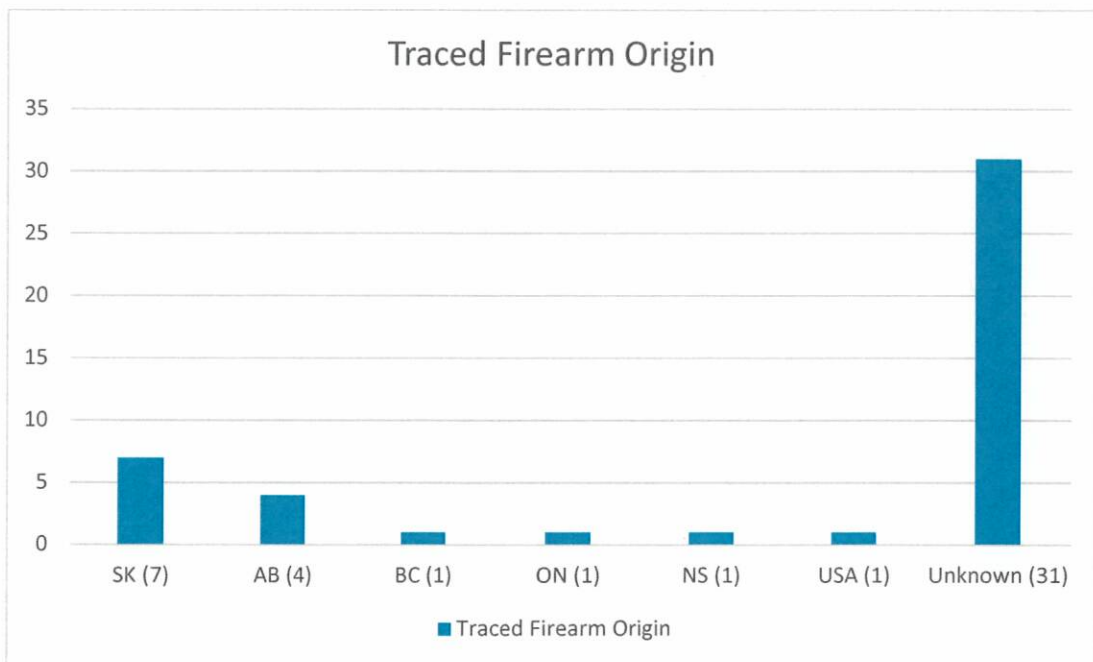
46
of Crime Guns Traced



Firearm Type



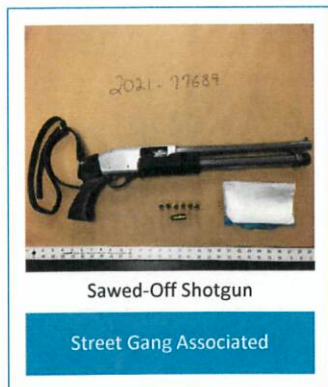
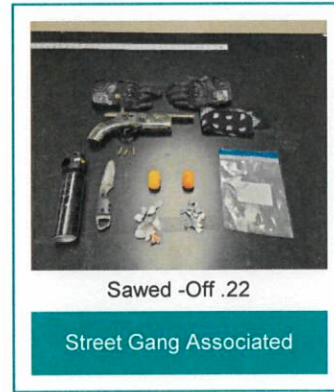
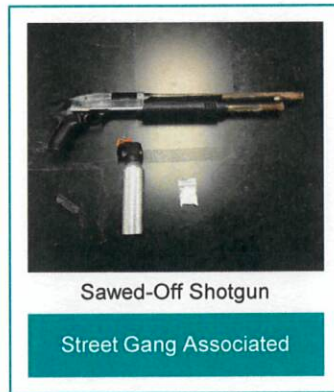
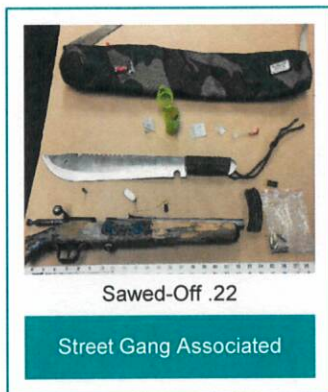
Traced Firearm Origin



ENFORCEMENT ACTION

The Guns and Gangs Unit seized 53 firearms in 2021. Predominantly, the majority of the firearms were seized from gang members. In addition to the firearms that were taken off the street, the majority of the occurrences included a variety of secondary weapons such as bear mace, machete or knives. Firearms used by gang members are normally obtained through residential break and enters.

Gang firearms are often long guns (rifle or shotgun) that are modified (sawed off) for concealment and sometimes are painted or taped to reflect the colors of a specific street gang. Firearms seized through drug investigations are more likely to include handguns that have been trafficked with or as part of the drug transactions. The following is a sample of the firearms seized and type of investigation the seizure came from:





Sawed-Off Rifle .22

Street Gang Associated



Sawed-Off Shotgun

Street Gang Associated



Sawed-Off Shotgun / Rifle .303

Street Gang Associated



Handgun 9mm

Drug Associated



Handgun .22

Drug Associated



Handgun .38

Firearms Investigation



Rifle .22 Handgun .38

Drug Associated



Rifle .22 Shotgun

Drug Associated



Rifle 30-30

Drug Associated

Appendix "A"

Firearm Type	PI	PSS	Grand Total
ALL OTHER FIREARMS	7	1	8
ALL OTHER FIREARMS	7		7
SINGLE SHOT		1	1
HANDGUN	210	87	297
AIR GUNS	179	53	232
ALL OTHER FIREARMS	3	1	4
MULTI BARREL		2	2
REVOLVER	6	17	23
SEMI AUTOMATIC	20	12	32
SINGLE SHOT	2	2	4
RIFLES	115	80	195
AIR GUNS	27	30	57
BOLT ACTION	24	16	40
BREECH OR MUZZLE LOADERS		1	1
LEVER ACTION	8	3	11
PUMP ACTION	2	4	6
SEMI AUTOMATIC	32	15	47
SINGLE SHOT	22	11	33
SHOTGUNS	60	30	90
ALL OTHER FIREARMS	2	1	3
BOLT ACTION		1	1
MULTI BARREL	4	1	5
PUMP ACTION	28	19	47
SEMI AUTOMATIC	7	3	10
SINGLE SHOT	19	5	24
Grand Total	392	198	590