



COLORADO

Division of Criminal Justice

Department of Public Safety

Firearm Thefts & Recoveries in Colorado

2019 to 2024

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Prepared by:

Mindy Duong, Statistical Analyst

Michael Phillips, Statistical Analyst

Corey Snow, Research Analyst

Office of Research and Statistics

Division of Criminal Justice

Colorado Department of Public Safety

Colorado Department of Public Safety

Stan Hilkey, Executive Director

Division of Criminal Justice

Matthew M. Lunn, Director

Office of Research and Statistics

Jack K. Reed, Research Director

700 Kipling Street, Suite 3000

Denver, CO 80215

Telephone: 303-239-4442

Fax: 303-239-4491

dcj.colorado.gov/duck-offices/ors



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Introduction

Understanding firearm theft and recovery data is essential in addressing and preventing gun-related crimes and creating effective policies that enhance public safety and community well-being. Increased prevalence of firearms, especially illegal possession of them, contributes to increased violent crimes and poses significant risks to individuals and the larger community (Semenza, 2022; Lopez & Haskins, 2021; Smart, 2018; Moore & Bergner, 2016). By analyzing trends in firearm theft and recovery, law enforcement agencies, policymakers, and communities can implement targeted strategies to reduce gun-related crimes and improve security measures. In addition, this data helps identify vulnerabilities in firearm storage and distribution, promoting responsible ownership and theft prevention efforts. A comprehensive approach to tracking and analyzing this information is essential for reducing the risks associated with stolen firearms and strengthening overall public safety.

Data & Methods

The data presented throughout this report were collected from publicly available sources, specifically the Colorado Bureau of Investigation's (CBI) National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) Firearms Trace Data. This report will conclude with a list of literature from various peer-reviewed sources and information on topics of interest related to firearm thefts and recoveries. The data and information provided throughout this report are as current and accurate as possible, and any errors in the analysis are the responsibility of the report's authors. The following sections provide details on how the firearm thefts and recoveries are collected and reported.

Firearm Thefts

The CBI provides NIBRS crime data on a monthly basis through the [Colorado Crime Statistics](#) website. NIBRS collects comprehensive data on criminal activity, including the location of offenses, victim information, the value of items stolen, and details for all involved offenses. This reporting methodology provides a more robust picture of crime compared to the UCR summary method (more information about [the transition from the UCR's Summary Reporting System \(SRS\) to NIBRS](#)).

It is important to note that theft of a firearm is reported as a single element within an offense, meaning that if multiple firearms are stolen, it is still only noted once in the data. While the estimated value of the reported firearms is included, there are concerns about the reliability of this measure. The "firearm theft" measure is thus a count of the times firearms were reported stolen, not a count of total firearms stolen, which is a higher figure that cannot be estimated with available data.

This report will focus on firearm thefts in Colorado between **January 2019 through December 2024**.

Firearm Thefts Data

The table below illustrates annual firearm theft totals reported from 2019 to 2024, showing a total of **20,824** reported firearm thefts in Colorado in the six-year period. Firearm thefts increased by 33.9% from 2019 to 2020, likely influenced by an increase in gun purchases, a rise in firearm purchase denials, and a surge in vehicle-related thefts ([Szkola et al., 2024](#); [Testa et al., 2024](#); [Whitehurst & Richer, 2024](#); [CBI InstaCheck Statistics](#)). The trend peaked in 2021 before declining from 2022 onward. The most significant drop occurred between 2023 and 2024, with a 19.1% decrease, potentially reflecting the impact of new legislation, such as [House Bill \(HB\) 25-1062](#), targeted law enforcement efforts ([Office of Governor Jared Polis, 2024](#); [Wilson, 2025](#)), and a decline in motor vehicle thefts. The sharp decline in 2024 suggests a positive shift for the community in the overall trajectory of firearm thefts.

Table 1. Total number of firearm theft incidents in Colorado and yearly percent change, 2019 to 2024

Year	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Total
Annual Total	2,834	3,794	3,857	3,747	3,644	2,948	20,824
Percent Change	N/A	+33.9%	+1.7%	-2.9%	-2.7%	-19.1%	AVG: +2.2%

Source: Colorado Bureau of Investigation, *Crime Statistics*, retrieved April 27, 2025.

NOTE: An incident may involve one or more firearms, so these data reflect the number of times a firearm theft was reported, not the actual number of firearms reported stolen.

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 led to a significant increase in firearm purchases across the United States (U.S.), likely driven by concerns over personal safety and potential civil unrest (Hill et al., 2021; Young, 2022). Furthermore, individuals who purchased firearms after March 2020 were more likely to store them in vehicles, both locked and unlocked, creating more opportunities for firearm thefts from vehicles ([Testa et al., 2024](#)). FBI data indicates that the rate of firearm thefts from vehicles tripled over the past decade, with a notable 51% spike during the pandemic period ([Szkola et al., 2024](#); [Whitehurst & Richer, 2024](#)). Data from [Everytown for Gun Safety](#) indicates that firearm thefts from vehicles have become the largest source of stolen guns in the U.S. In addition, motor vehicle thefts increased across the country during the pandemic, which corresponded with the increase in stolen firearms as more firearms were being stored in vehicles ([Testa et al., 2024](#)). The convergence of elevated vehicle theft rates, higher gun ownership, and uncertain firearm storage practices likely contributed to the overall increase in firearm thefts observed between 2019 and 2021.

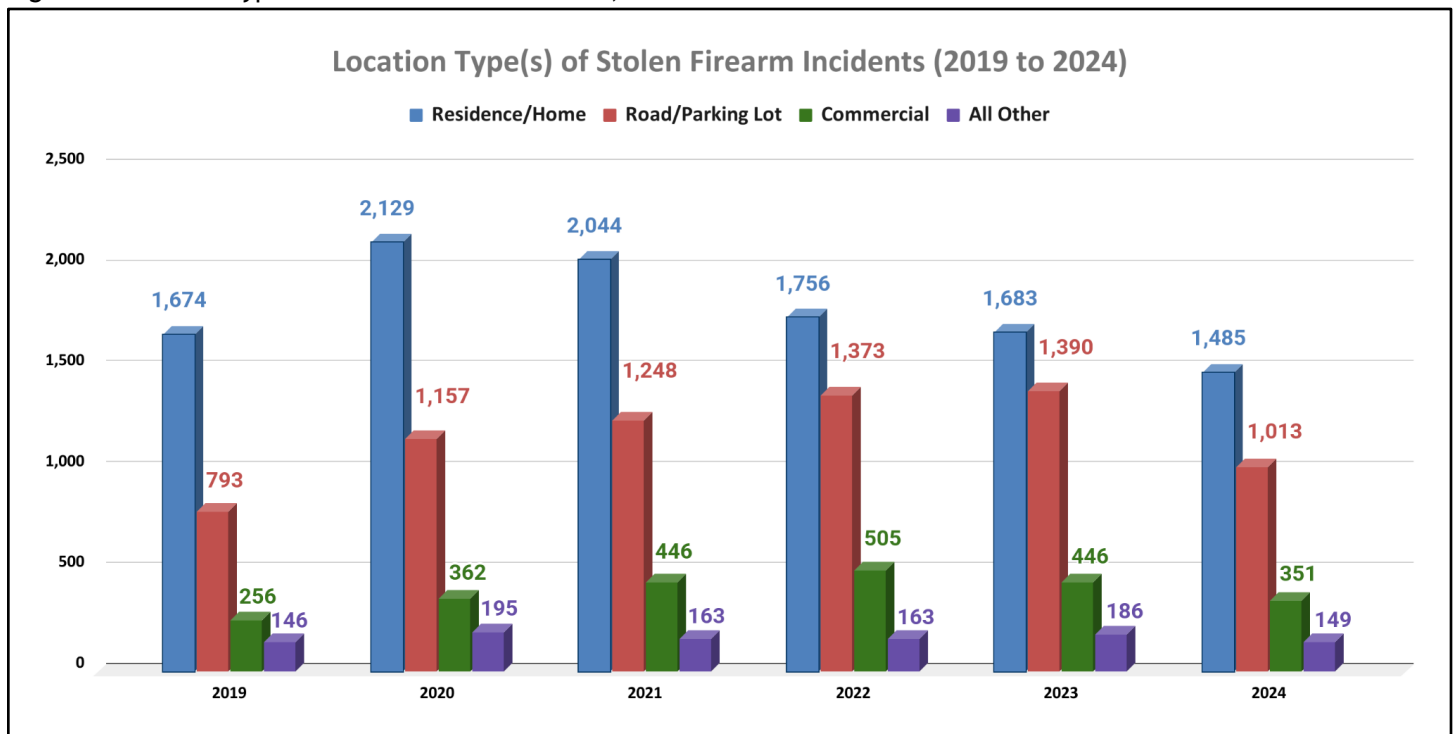
The decline in firearm thefts in Colorado between 2022 and 2024 can be attributed to a combination of legislative measures, proactive law enforcement efforts, and an overall reduction in property crime rates. In May 2024, Colorado enacted legislation ([HB24-1348](#)) mandating that firearms left unattended in vehicles be stored in locked, hard-sided containers out of plain view. This law aims to reduce firearm thefts from vehicles, which have become a significant source of stolen firearms in the state. For instance, in 2023, 846 out of 1,221 reported firearm thefts in Denver were from vehicles, with 61% of those not being a part of a motor vehicle theft as well ([Sherrod, 2024](#)). The Colorado Bureau of Investigation (CBI) was also granted expanded authority to investigate firearm-related crimes through legislation ([Senate Bill \(SB\) 24-003](#)) enacted in August 2024. From August 2024 to August 2025, CBI reported investigating 56 cases resulting in 47 arrests and 135 firearms seized (CBI, Internal Communication, October 8, 2025). Statewide data indicate an ongoing decline in property crimes, including motor vehicle thefts, which are often associated with firearm thefts. Collectively, these legislative actions, enhanced enforcement capabilities, and broader declines in

property crime appear to be contributing factors in the observed reduction in firearm thefts, suggesting a correlation between targeted policy interventions and improved public safety outcomes.

Theft Location

From 2019 to 2024, residences or homes consistently accounted for the highest number of reported firearm theft incidents, peaking at 2,129 incidents in 2020 before gradually declining to 1,485 by 2024. Roadside and parking lot locations experienced a notable increase over the same period, rising from 793 thefts in 2019 to a peak of 1,390 in 2023. Commercial locations saw steady growth through 2022, with a high of 505 thefts, followed by a decline in the two subsequent years. The "All Other" category, which includes construction sites, educational facilities, government or public buildings, and unknown locations, remained relatively stable throughout, fluctuating between 146 and 195 incidents annually. Please see Figure 1 for more details.

Figure 1. Location type of stolen firearm incidents, 2019 to 2024



Source: Colorado Bureau of Investigation, *Crime Statistics*, retrieved April 27, 2025.

NOTE: The number of locations exceeds the number of stolen firearm incidents, as multiple crimes and each of their locations (which may be the same) can be associated with one stolen firearm incident.

Almost half (48.9%) of firearm thefts were reported as stolen from a vehicle. The largest proportion was from the “roads/parking lots” location type, where 73.8% of firearm thefts from that location were from vehicles (Table 2). Across the six-year period from 2019 to 2024, of the 10,175 firearm thefts from vehicles, 73.8% of firearm thefts from vehicles occurred at road/parking lot locations. 36.2% of firearm thefts at residences were from vehicles, 29.1% of firearm thefts from commercial properties were from vehicles, and 45.4% of firearm thefts from other locations were from vehicles (Table 2). However, it is important to note that location classifications remain ambiguous. For example, road/parking lot entries may include public streets adjacent to residential properties or parking lots within apartment complexes, which may technically fall under residential settings. These limitations complicate location-based interpretation, but the strong association between firearm theft and motor vehicles reinforces the importance of secure storage practices, especially when firearms are left unattended in vehicles. Please see Table 2 for more details.

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Table 2. Number and percent of firearm thefts from motor vehicles from each location type, 2019 to 2024

Location	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Total
Residence	487 (29.1%)	811 (38.1%)	740 (36.2%)	612 (34.9%)	670 (39.8%)	580 (39.1%)	3,900 (36.2%)
Road/Parking	590 (74.5%)	889 (76.8%)	904 (72.6%)	992 (72.4%)	998 (75.7%)	762 (75.7%)	5,135 (73.8%)
Commercial	75 (29.6%)	73 (20.2%)	129 (29.0%)	147 (29.2%)	156 (35.1%)	106 (30.5%)	686 (29.1%)
All Other	62 (42.5%)	95 (48.7%)	74 (45.4%)	76 (46.9%)	76 (41.1%)	71 (48.0%)	454 (45.4%)
Total	1,214 (42.8%)	1,868 (49.2%)	1,847 (47.9%)	1,827 (48.8%)	1,900 (52.1%)	1,519 (51.5%)	10,175 (48.9%)

Source: Colorado Bureau of Investigation, *Crime Statistics*, retrieved April 27, 2025.

NOTE: Percentages indicate the proportion of firearm thefts from a motor vehicle for each specific location type.

From 2019 to 2024, the Denver Police Department (PD) consistently reported the highest number of firearm thefts, peaking at 819 incidents in 2023. However, Pueblo PD recorded the highest rate among the ten Colorado agencies with the most firearm theft incidents, with firearm theft rates more than doubling between 2019 (108.6 per 100,000 residents) and 2021 (241.7), before gradually declining to 169.0 in 2024. Colorado Springs PD and Aurora PD also exhibited elevated rates over time, though the Colorado Springs PD maintained a relatively stable trend after a sharp increase in 2020. Meanwhile, agencies such as the El Paso County Sheriff's Office and Arvada PD reported comparatively low and stable rates. Notably, several mid-sized jurisdictions, such as Westminster, Lakewood, and Greeley, saw significant spikes in rates between 2020 and 2022 before declining again in 2024. These patterns indicate that while larger urban jurisdictions experience higher total counts, smaller jurisdictions like Pueblo face disproportionately high rates of firearm theft relative to population. Please see Table 3 for more details.

Table 3. Top 10 Colorado agencies for reported firearm thefts (count and rate per 100K population), 2019 to 2024

Firearm Thefts Top 10 Agencies	2019		2020		2021		2022		2023		2024	
Agency	N	Rate	N	Rate	N	Rate	N	Rate	N	Rate	N	Rate
Denver PD	384	52.7	560	75.9	672	90.8	783	111.0	819	115.0	600	84.2
Colorado Springs PD	413	86.1	470	96.9	479	98.0	415	85.1	506	103.4	471	96.3
Aurora PD	258	67.8	312	80.9	369	93.7	355	90.5	309	77.8	262	66.0
Pueblo PD	122	108.6	203	179.6	274	241.7	267	237.1	191	171.7	188	169.0
El Paso County SO	103	53.2	139	72.3	111	58.3	84	40.7	109	52.6	100	48.3
Lakewood PD	95	59.9	142	88.9	142	89.3	136	86.6	131	83.9	78	50.0
Thornton PD	61	42.9	92	63.8	98	64.8	68	47.5	79	54.9	74	51.5
Greeley PD	44	40.3	64	57.9	79	71.4	96	87.9	97	88.8	64	58.6
Westminster PD	37	32.3	86	75.5	110	94.9	84	74.4	80	70.4	59	51.9
Arvada PD	57	46.6	75	61.0	64	51.8	57	46.6	25	20.8	56	46.6

Source: Colorado Bureau of Investigation, *Crime Statistics*, retrieved April 27, 2025.

Theft Victimization

Between 2019 and 2024, males consistently represented the majority of victims from incidents involving firearm theft in Colorado, representing 73.8% of all reported victims over the six-year period compared to females at 25.7% and unknown at 0.5% (Table 4). Despite year-to-year fluctuations in total victim counts, the gender proportions remained relatively stable, with males representing roughly three-quarters of the victim population and females representing roughly one-quarter – at the time of this reporting, *Crime Statistics* does not capture non-binary gender categories.

Table 4. Firearm theft victim gender, including total count and percentage of total, 2019 to 2024

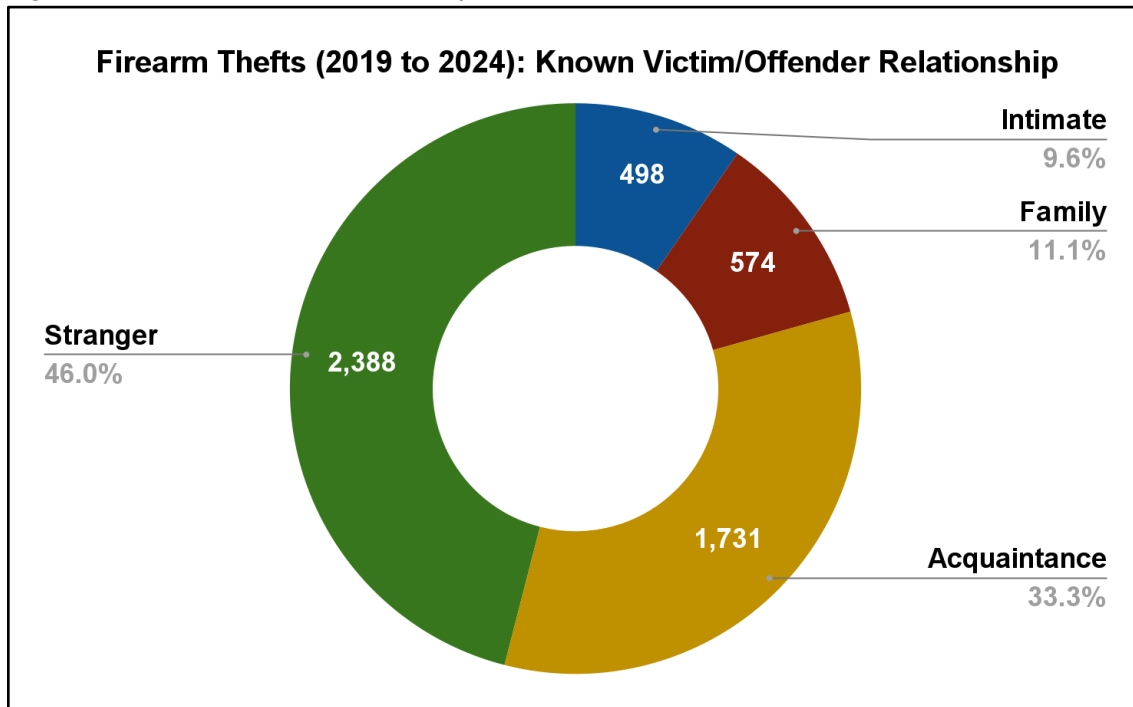
Firearm Theft Victim Gender	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Total
Female Count	845	1,038	1,132	1,151	1,129	867	6,162
Female Percentage	25.2%	23.8%	26.0%	26.7%	26.7%	25.6%	25.7%
Male Count	2,459	3,304	3,198	3,142	3,086	2,512	17,701
Male Percentage	73.4%	75.8%	73.6%	73.0%	73.0%	74.1%	73.8%
Unknown Count	46	15	17	14	11	12	115
Unknown Percentage	1.4%	0.3%	0.4%	0.3%	0.3%	0.4%	0.5%
Total	3,350	4,357	4,347	4,307	4,226	3,391	23,978

Source: Colorado Bureau of Investigation, *Crime Statistics*, retrieved April 27, 2025.

NOTE: The number of victims exceeds the number of stolen firearms as there can be multiple victims for one incident.

From 2019 to 2024, when the victim-offender relationship was known in firearm theft cases, nearly half of the incidents (46.0%) were perpetrated against strangers (Figure 2). However, a significant portion (over half) of known firearm thefts were perpetrated by someone familiar to the victim; specifically, acquaintances accounted for one-third (33.3%) of these thefts, followed by family members (11.1%) and intimate partners (9.6%) (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Victim/Offender Relationship in firearm theft cases, 2019 to 2024



Source: Colorado Bureau of Investigation, *Crime Statistics*, retrieved April 27, 2025.

NOTE: Over 76% of victim/offender relationships were unknown or missing and were removed from the total count.

In summary, firearm thefts in Colorado between 2019 and 2024 followed a complex trajectory shaped by broader societal events, evolving theft patterns, and legislative responses. While residential locations consistently accounted for the highest number of firearm thefts, a closer look revealed that almost half of the incidents involved thefts from vehicles, not necessarily the structure itself. Although larger agencies (e.g., Denver PD) consistently reported high firearm theft totals, smaller agencies (e.g., Pueblo PD) experienced disproportionately high rates relative to population. Victim data further emphasized disparities, with males comprising nearly three-quarters of all victims of incidents involving firearm theft. Most offenders were reportedly strangers to the victim, but a notable portion involved acquaintances, intimates, or family members. The recent decline in firearm thefts aligns with legislative efforts and enhanced enforcement, highlighting the value of targeted, data-informed strategies to reduce firearm theft and improve public safety.

Firearm Recovery & Trace

The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) provides information on recovered firearms from a crime or other firearm-related event that were submitted by a law enforcement agency for a trace. A key component of ATF's enforcement mission is the tracing of firearms on behalf of thousands of local, state, federal, and international law enforcement agencies. Data are provided through the [ATF, Firearms Trace Data](#). The data are made available during the fourth quarter of each year for the previous calendar year.

This report will focus on recovered firearms in Colorado between **January 2019 through December 2023**. The data presented in this brief were collected from ATF, *Firearm Trace Data*, then organized and summarized for ease of consumption. The report provides a high-level overview of the recovered firearm situation in Colorado; the data presented are one of many potential metrics to gauge proactive and preventative initiatives regarding stolen and recovered firearms. For more information, see the [Firearm Usage in Violent Crimes report](#) and the [Colorado Firearm Data Dashboard](#).

Firearm Recoveries Data

Firearm recoveries submitted for tracing to the ATF in Colorado have risen consistently each year for the past five years, with an average increase of 11.8% between 2019 and 2023. During this five-year timeframe, **36,006** firearms were recovered in Colorado (Table 5).

Table 5. Total firearms recovered in Colorado and yearly percent change, 2019 to 2023

Year	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Total
Annual Total	5,637	6,615	7,051	7,917	8,786	36,006
Percent Change	N/A	+17.3%	+6.6%	+12.3%	+11.0%	AVG: +11.8%

Source: ATF, *Firearms Trace Data*, retrieved February 7, 2025.

The most common types of firearms recovered in Colorado in the past five years are pistols (69.4%), followed by rifles (12.9%), and revolvers (9.4%) (Table 6). The number of recovered pistols in Colorado has increased each year; it is unknown how many of these were the result of 3D printing or “ghost guns”. In 2023, machinegun conversion devices made the top list of recovered firearms for the third time; it is unknown how many of these were the result of 3D printing. The ATF produced a [fact sheet](#) to further explain what machinegun conversion devices are. The increase in machinegun conversion devices suggests more sophisticated firearm modifications, possibly due to technological access and black-market demand.

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Table 6. Type of firearms recovered in Colorado, 2019 to 2023

Firearm Type	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Firearm Type 5-Yr Total	Firearm Type 5-Yr Total (%)
Pistols	3,642	4,390	4,923	5,680	6,349	24,984	69.4%
Rifles	805	1,002	885	955	993	4,640	12.9%
Revolvers	636	682	654	663	765	3,400	9.4%
Shotguns	452	461	518	499	516	2,446	6.8%
Machinegun Conversion Devices	Other	Other	Other	Other	60	N/A*	N/A*
Machineguns	33	Other	Other	44	31	N/A*	N/A*
Derringers	26	40	35	41	Other	N/A*	N/A*
Receivers/Frames	Other	15	16	Other	Other	N/A*	N/A*
Other**	43	25	20	35	72	195	0.5%
Annual Total	5,637	6,615	7,051	7,917	8,786	36,006	100.0%

Source: ATF, *Firearms Trace Data*, retrieved February 7, 2025.

* The total cannot be accurately calculated as exact numbers were not available for at least one year due to inclusion in the “Other” category.

** The “Other” category varies every year as the total count for a particular firearm type did not meet the minimum threshold to have its own separate category for each respective year.

Firearm Source

The majority (72.1%) of recovered firearms originated from within Colorado, implying that local firearm theft prevention efforts may be more impactful in reducing stolen guns rather than cross-state anti-gun trafficking efforts, as the majority of recovered firearms were not coming from other states (Table 7).

Table 7. Total firearms recovered in Colorado between 2019 and 2023, including the total number of known sources (i.e., where the firearm originated from), and how many of those were from Colorado

Year	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Total
Annual Total	5,637	6,615	7,051	7,917	8,786	36,006
Known Source Count	4,498	5,197	5,727	6,528	6,942	28,892
Known Source %	79.8%	78.6%	81.2%	82.5%	79.0%	80.2%
Colorado Count	3,140	3,669	4,174	4,842	4,995	20,820
% Colorado %	69.8%	70.6%	72.9%	74.2%	72.0%	72.1%

Source: ATF, *Firearms Trace Data*, retrieved February 7, 2025.

Recovery Location

The majority of firearms recovered in Colorado in the past five years were recovered in Denver, Aurora, and Colorado Springs, which are also the most populous cities in Colorado (Table 8).

Table 8. Top cities in Colorado for firearm recoveries between 2019 and 2023

City	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Total
Denver	1,507	1,579	1,854	2,056	2,823	9,819
Colorado Springs	1,090	1,410	1,426	1,520	1,309	6,755
Aurora	227	259	239	511	608	1,844
Pueblo	187	283	516	603	593	2,182
Lakewood	359	617	386	383	380	2,125
Grand Junction	269	281	232	278	262	1,322
Arvada*	Other	Other	Other	Other	142	N/A**
Greeley	117	126	107	Other	128	478
Loveland	89	109	92	98	125	513
Brighton*	Other	Other	Other	Other	109	N/A**
Other*	1,724	1,947	2,192	2,463	2,304	10,630
Unknown	68	4	7	5	3	87
Total	5,637	6,615	7,051	7,917	8,786	36,006

Source: ATF, *Firearms Trace Data*, retrieved February 7, 2025.

NOTE: The cities listed are the top cities where firearms were recovered in 2023.

* The “Other” category includes *known* cities where firearms were recovered, but did not meet the minimum threshold to have their own separate category, or were not a top city in 2023; Arvada and Brighton were top cities in 2023 but were not top cities in the previous years.

** The total cannot be accurately calculated as exact numbers were not available for at least one year due to inclusion in the “Other” category.

Related Crimes

The majority of recovered firearms were linked to weapon-related offenses (57.1%), drug offenses accounted for 5.3% of recoveries, and traffic offenses accounted for 4.7%. Homicide, aggravated assault, and suicide accounted for approximately 4% of recoveries each. (Table 9).

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Table 9. Known crimes associated with recovered firearms in Colorado, 2019 to 2023

Crime Category (Alphabetized)	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Crime Category 5-Yr Total	Crime Category 5-Yr Total (%)
Aggravated Assault	182	215	324	290	357	1,368	3.8%
Dangerous Drugs	402	354	424	432	299	1,911	5.3%
Homicide	234	243	266	348	364	1,455	4.0%
Other	1,026	1,304	1,123	1,171	1,429	6,053	16.8%
Property Crimes	195	251	281	363	385	1,475	4.1%
Suicide	248	245	318	317	351	1,479	4.1%
Traffic Offense	216	248	311	428	507	1,710	4.7%
Weapon-Related*	3,134	3,755	4,004	4,568	5,094	20,555	57.1%
Annual Total	5,637	6,615	7,051	7,917	8,786	36,006	100.0%

Source: ATF, *Firearms Trace Data*, retrieved February 7, 2025.

* Weapon-related offenses encompass firearms under investigation, found firearm, possession of a weapon, and other weapon offenses.

The largest proportion (41.2%) of firearms in this dataset were not linked to a crime until more than three years after they were lawfully purchased (Table 10).

Table 10. Time-to-crime for firearms that were recovered in Colorado, 2019 to 2023

Time Frame	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Time-to-Crime 5-Yr Total	Time-to-Crime 5-Yr Total (%)
Under 3 Months	330	597	609	532	494	2,562	7.1%
3 to 7 Months	300	468	479	547	501	2,295	6.4%
7 to 12 Months	250	342	524	531	514	2,161	6.0%
1 to 2 Years	563	540	815	1,163	974	4,055	11.3%
2 to 3 Years	460	438	397	661	837	2,793	7.8%
> 3 Years	2,542	2,757	2,875	3,060	3,607	14,841	41.2%
Missing	1,192	1,473	1,352	1,423	1,859	7,299	20.3%
Annual Total	5,637	6,615	7,051	7,917	8,786	36,006	100.0%

Source: ATF, *Firearms Trace Data*, retrieved February 7, 2025.

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