

Police Department Service Weapon Survey

As part of the National Gun Violence Research Center project, supported by the Joyce Foundation, the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) conducted an exploratory survey of gun policies and purchasing practices of major metropolitan police agencies. Through the survey, PERF sought to obtain information about which types of service weapons and ammunition large agencies most frequently purchase, how much the agencies are spending on firearms and ammunition, and how agencies manage their purchases of firearms and ammunition for officers.

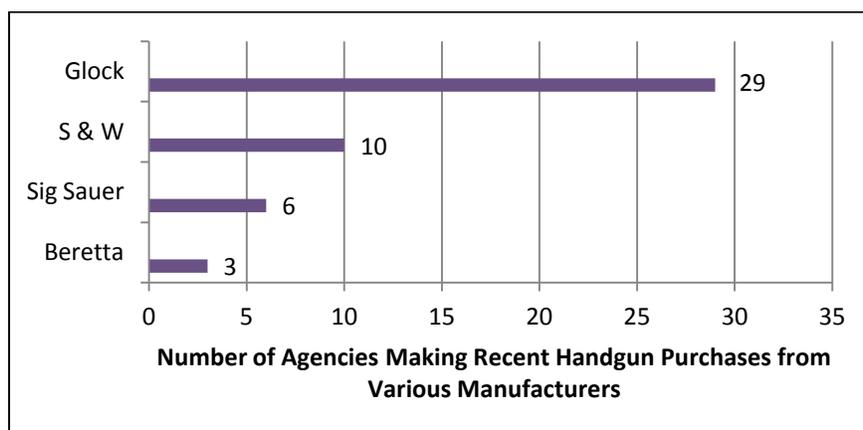
The survey was sent to the 61 largest police agencies in the country. Fifty-three agencies returned completed surveys, for a response rate of 87 percent.

Handguns Carried by Officers

Seventy-three percent of the agencies responding to the survey said their officers carry semi-automatic weapons, while 27 percent said officers carry either semi-automatic weapons or revolvers. None stated that officers carried only revolvers. PERF asked agencies about their policies regarding the provision of officers' handguns. Sixty-nine percent of agencies responded that the agency acquires and provides ALL handguns for sworn officers to carry on duty.

The majority of agencies responding to the survey (52 percent) said they competitively bid all purchases of service handguns, while 23 percent said they had a sole source agreement with a specific manufacturer. The remaining agencies said they had not purchased handguns recently, had made both competitive and sole-source purchases, or had other purchasing arrangements.

When asked if the agency had purchased handguns during the past 5 years, twenty-nine of the agencies reported purchasing Glocks. Ten agencies reported purchasing Smith and Wesson, while six reported purchasing Sig Sauer handguns.



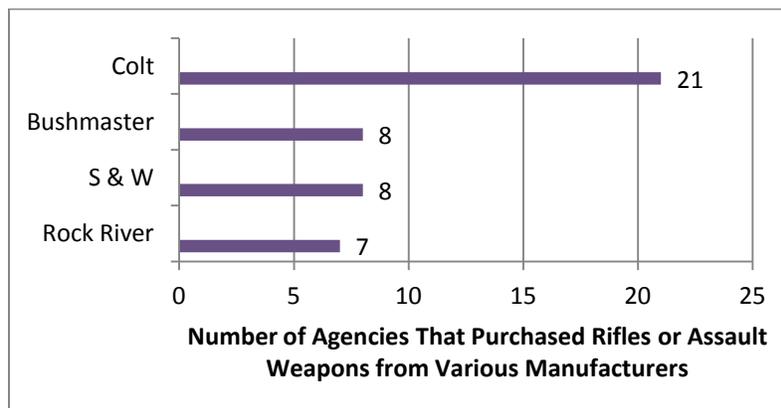
Responding agencies purchased a median number of 220 handguns between 2008 and 2012, or about 44 per year per agency. More than one in three agencies did not report purchasing any handguns during the five-year interval. At the other extreme, approximately one in four agencies reported purchasing more than 500 guns over the five years covered by the survey (see table below).

Total Handgun Purchases for Years 2008-2012	
No purchase reported	37%
1 – 250 handguns purchased	16%
251 – 500 handguns purchased	21%
More than 500 handguns purchased	26%
Total	100%

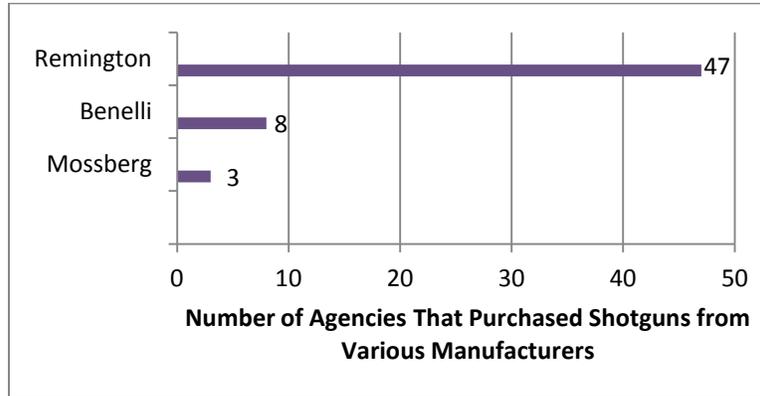
The survey also asked respondents about the caliber and magazine capacity of handguns purchased. The most common type weapon purchased was 40-caliber (purchased by 65 percent of agencies), and the most common magazine capacity was 15 rounds (purchased by 63 percent of agencies).

Other Firearms

Ninety-three percent of responding agencies equip some of their officers with rifles or assault weapons. The average number of rifles owned by responding agencies was 212. Purchases of rifles and assault weapons were infrequent. A large majority of agencies (81 percent) said most years they did not purchase any of these weapons, and eight percent said they purchase 10 or more in a typical year. Twenty-one responding agencies (38 percent) said they purchase Colt rifles and assault weapons, making it the most commonly used manufacturer for such weapons. Fewer than 10 agencies listed Bushmaster, Smith & Wesson or Rock River as their manufacturer for rifles and assault weapons (see figure below).



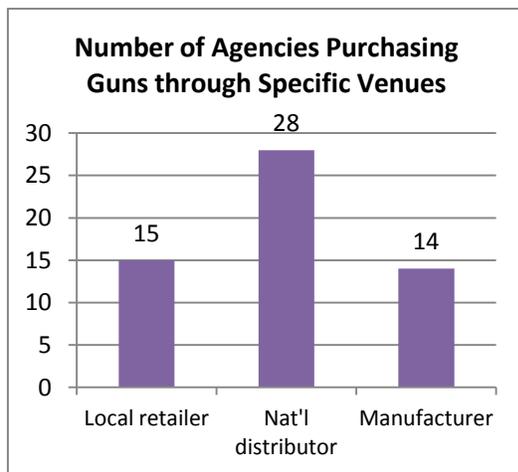
Ninety-four percent of responding agencies stated that they equip some their officers with shotguns. On average, agencies possessed 306 shotguns each, with only six agencies reporting a recent purchase of these weapons. Agencies overwhelmingly favored using Remington as their manufacturer for shotguns (see figure below).



How Firearms Were Acquired

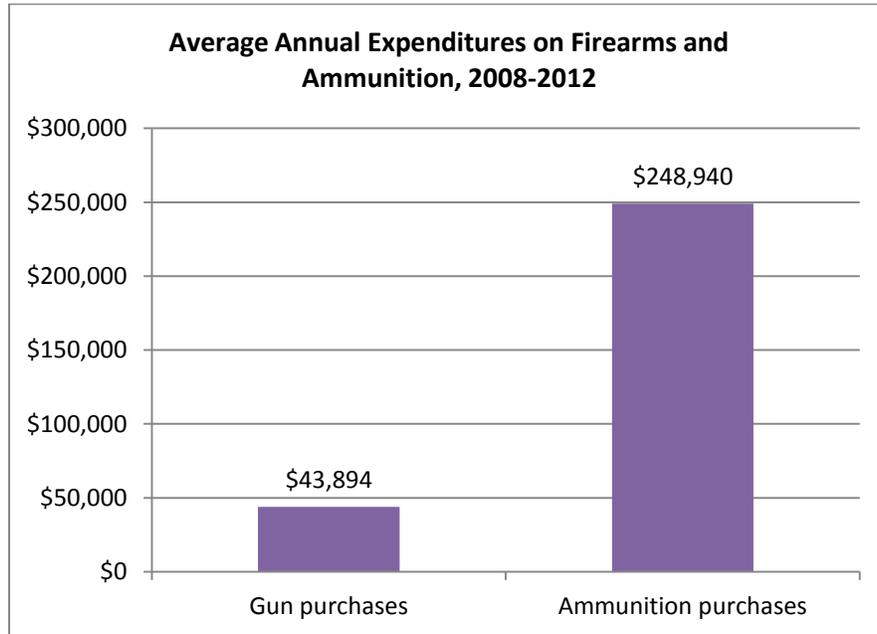
Forty-eight percent of responding agencies said they had obtained firearms by means other than direct purchase over the past five years. These guns came from a variety of sources, including surplus, donations, trade-ins, seizure, forfeiture, and confiscated. The number of firearms acquired through these means ranged from one to 2,300 weapons.

Agencies also were asked the sources through which they purchased both guns and ammunition. For both guns and ammunition, the most common source was a national distributor. Purchasing from local retail outlets was the next most popular choice. Purchases from manufacturers were common for guns, but rare for ammunition.



Amount Spent on Firearms

Finally, agencies were asked about expenditures on firearms and ammunition over the past five years. The annual amount spent on guns averaged \$43,894. However, ammunition costs were considerably higher, with agencies reporting an average, annual amount spent of \$248,940.



Breaking down the results by agency size and region of the country leads to some interesting patterns.¹ The table below shows that larger agencies were more likely than smaller agencies to purchase guns through national distributors (as opposed to local retailers or directly from manufacturers). Spending per officer for both guns and ammunition decreased as agency size increased. In other words, larger agencies spent less per officer on guns and ammunition than smaller agencies.

¹ Agency size is based on the number of sworn officers as follows: 15 smaller agencies (less than 1,000), 22 medium agencies (1001-2,000), and 16 larger agencies (more than 2,000). Respondents were divided into 16 Eastern, 20 Central, and 17 Western regions.

Looking at the results by region, Western agencies are more likely than Central or Eastern agencies to purchase guns through national distributors. And Western agencies spent the most per officer on guns and ammunition, followed by Central and Eastern agencies.

	Purchase Guns from National Distributor	Spending per Officer on Guns	Spending per Officer on Ammunition
Agency Size			
Smaller agencies	33%	\$39	\$199
Medium agencies	59%	\$37	\$179
Larger agencies	63%	\$32	\$127
Region			
Eastern	38%	\$26	\$127
Central	55%	\$37	\$153
Western	65%	\$47	\$227