

## Data UNODC - Metadata Information



### Firearms Trafficking

The tables on firearms trafficking include figures on arms seized, found and surrendered, tracing outcome, criminal justice system response, parts and components and ammunition. National data are submitted by Member States to UNODC through the Illicit Arm Flows Questionnaire (UN-IAFQ) or other means.

#### Dataset characteristics

Access link: <https://dataunodc.un.org/dp-firearms-arms-seized>

Last update: 15/05/2025

Base period: Calendar Year

Data source(s): National data on firearms, their parts and components, ammunition and the criminal justice system collected through the UN-IAFQ. Complementary data have been collected mainly from the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs' National Report on the implementation of the Programme of Action on small arms and light weapons (UNODA PoA). Please see below for National data collection sources.

#### Contact

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

Email: [unodc-dass@un.org](mailto:unodc-dass@un.org)

#### Statistical concepts and definitions

##### *Firearms trafficking*

The UN-IAFQ falls under the framework of the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, their Parts and Components and Ammunition ('the Firearms Protocol') supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, which was adopted by the General Assembly [Resolution 55/255](#) in 2001. The definitions used in the questionnaire are in line with the use of terms outlined in the Protocol.

**Firearms:** refers to 'small arms and light weapons', defined as any portable lethal weapon that expels or launches, is designed to expel or launch, or may be readily converted to expel or launch a shot, bullet or projectile by the action of an explosive, excluding antique small arms and light weapons or their replicas. Antique small arms and light weapons and their replicas will be defined in accordance with domestic law, and in no case will they include those manufactured after 1899. Arms include all firearms, as defined in the Firearms Protocol.

**Seized item:** Arms, their parts and components and ammunition that have been temporarily physically apprehended by a competent authority in relation to a suspected criminal offence or administrative violation related to these items. Seized items can be permanently confiscated at a later stage by the state or returned to their legitimate owners.

**Found item:** Any arms, parts and components or ammunition apprehended by authorities not linked to an intentional or planned investigation or inspection, neither attributable to any apparent holder or owner, regardless of whether the item was reported lost or stolen.

**Surrendered item:** Any arms, their parts and components, and ammunition willingly handed to authorities, that is not linked to a planned investigation or inspection. The surrender may occur as a

personal initiative of a citizen, in the context of a voluntary surrender campaign, and disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration processes, inter alia.

Ammunition: The complete round or its components, including cartridge cases, primers, propellant powder, bullets or projectiles used in firearms.

Illicit trafficking: The import, export, trans-shipment, acquisition, sale, delivery, movement or transfer of arms, their parts and components, and ammunition from or across the territory of one State to that of another State if any one of the States concerned does not authorize it in accordance with national law of one of the countries involved or if the arms are not uniquely marked upon manufacture and marked upon import. Arms that were not properly deactivated according to the national legislation of the destination country can also be illicitly trafficked or smuggled.

Illicit manufacturing: The manufacturing or assembly of arms, their parts and components, or ammunition:

- (a) From parts and components illicitly trafficked;
- (b) Without a licence or authorization from a competent authority of the State party where the manufacture or assembly takes place; or
- (c) Without marking the weapon at the time of manufacture with a unique marking providing the name of the manufacturer, the country or place of manufacture and the serial number; or maintaining any alternative unique user-friendly marking with simple geometric symbols in combination with a numeric and/or alphanumeric code, permitting ready identification by all States of the country of manufacture. The manufacture of parts and components must be licensed and authorized in accordance with national law.

“Illicit manufacturing” also refers to illicitly reactivated arms. For example, reactivating a deactivated weapon, which is not considered to be a weapon anymore, is considered illicit manufacture, as well as manufacturing a weapon at home with parts and components trafficked through the web without licence or authorization.

Tracing: The systematic tracking of arms and, where possible, their parts and components, and ammunition, at a national and/or international level for the purpose of assisting the competent authorities of States Parties in detecting, investigating and analysing illicit manufacturing and illicit trafficking. Searching the national record for example is considered as tracing.

### *Criminal justice process*

Persons prosecuted: Alleged offenders against whom prosecution commenced in the reporting year. Persons may be prosecuted by the public prosecutor or the law enforcement agency responsible for prosecution. All persons for which prosecution starts are included, irrespective of the case-ending decision.

Persons brought before the criminal courts: Persons brought before any legal body authorized to pronounce a conviction under national criminal law, whether the person is finally acquitted or convicted, at the national level. Persons brought before court in a plea-bargaining procedure, or in an abbreviated procedure, are included.

Persons convicted: Persons found guilty by any legal body authorized to pronounce a conviction under national criminal law, whether or not the conviction was later upheld. Persons receiving a sentence after plea-bargaining, or in an abbreviated court procedure, are counted as persons convicted.



## Indicator definitions, statistical and measurement units

### Arms seized:

The counting unit is the number of individual arms seized. Certain countries may use other counted units.

### Instances/cases of seizures

The counting unit is the case of seizure. In most cases, an individual seizure case covers more than one arm.

### Tracing outcome:

Data on tracing outcome is used to calculate SDG indicator 16.4.2. The indicator is calculated as a proportion, and can be computed separately for each of seized, found and surrendered arms, as well as all three taken together.

The denominator of the proportion is the total number of arms seized, found and surrendered that are potentially traceable (i.e., uniquely identifiable through marking or unknown status with respect to marking).

The numerator includes all those arms for which the point of diversion was established / identified, either through tracing or by a competent authority (e.g. through intelligence).

SDG 16.4.2

$$= \frac{\text{Number of arms for which the illicit origin or context was established/identified (A + B + C)}}{\text{Total number of arms seized, found or surrendered (A + B + C + D + E + F + G)}}$$

**A:** Weapon seized/found/surrendered from illegitimate owner and weapon found in national registry (e.g., lost or stolen) (national tracing)

**B:** Point of diversion of the weapon (last legal record) identified through tracing and weapon found in foreign registry (international tracing)

**C:** Point of diversion otherwise established by a competent authority

**D:** Tracing attempted, but not enough information to identify point of diversion

**E:** Tracing procedure still pending

**F:** No tracing procedure initiated

**G:** Unknown status with respect to marking

## Use and interpretation of data

Multiple factors such as the functioning of the criminal justice system, the state in the investigation during which the data are recorded (e.g., when it is reported or after investigation) and the adoption of international statistical definition at the national level may have an impact on these data.

## Data sources and method of collection

### *National data on firearms*

The data are sourced from institutions responsible for the collection of data on firearms trafficking. Data are generated by law enforcement or criminal justice authorities, such as the police, national ballistic and/or intelligence services and other institutions involved in firearms tracing, National Commissions or Focal Points on Small Arms and Light Weapons, where they exist, registrars within the judicial system, inter alia. in the process of recording and investigating a crime event.

These data are collected from national authorities with the annual United Nations Surveys Illicit Arms Flows Questionnaire (UN-IAFQ). National focal points working in national agencies responsible

for statistics on crime and the criminal justice system and nominated by the Permanent Mission to UNODC are responsible for compiling the data from the other relevant agencies before transmitting the UN-IAFQ to UNODC. Following the submission, UNODC checks for consistency and coherence with other data sources.

Data submitted by Member States through other means or taken from other sources are added to the dataset after review by Member States.

#### Suggested citation

Please cite the data as follows: UNODC (2025), UNODC Research - Data Portal – Firearms Trafficking. <https://dataunodc.un.org/dp-firearms-arms-seized> (Accessed on [DD MMM YYYY]).