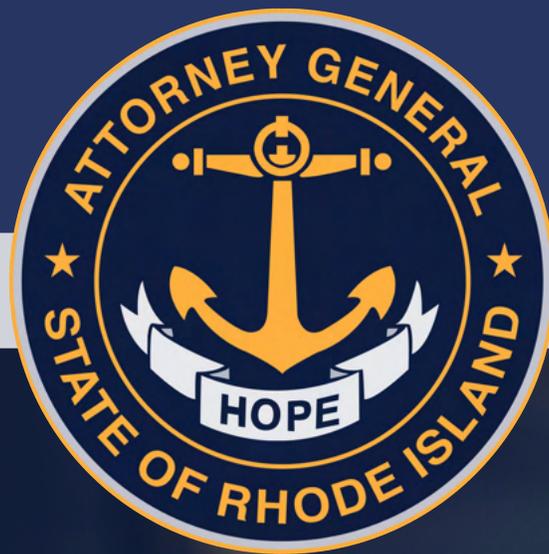


2023 Gun Crimes Report



The Honorable K. Joseph Shekarchi

The Honorable Dominick J. Ruggerio

Re: Annual Gun Crimes Report for 2023

Dear Speaker Shekarchi and President Ruggerio:

As I near the halfway point in my second term as Attorney General, the constant presence of firearms in our communities remains startling to me. Every day, our office prosecutes cases that involve the most violent crimes committed in Rhode Island. The data provided in this year's report will make clear, once again, that our state has a significant gun problem.

The report will also make clear that our Office continues to work proactively on this problem, using laws that are already on the books, while simultaneously advocating for stricter laws we know will help make our communities safer.

Consistent with my statutory duties under R.I.G.L. § 42-9-12.1, I submit this year's report to provide certain statistics involving firearms offenses in 2023. And as I have done in previous years, I also take this opportunity to provide additional information that illustrates the severity of the problem, providing greater context to what our Office is seeing and how we are working collaboratively with colleagues in law enforcement to address this issue.

This report will yet again demonstrate that gun violence continues to threaten our communities. Combatting gun violence and violent crime remains a priority for our Office and we intend to use every tool we have, and advocate for additional ones if necessary, to keep Rhode Islanders safe.

Sincerely,
Peter F. Neronha



2023: By the numbers

833

cases charged
& disposed

293

cases involving magazines
with capacity 11-30+

513

cases disposed
statewide

172

cases involving
multiple firearms

444

cases charged
statewide

99

cases involving
ghost guns*

370

cases charged
in Providence County

55

cases involving magazines
with capacity 30+

320

cases charged in 2023
remain pending

7

cases involving straw purchasing
or “lying & buying”

*Polymer80 guns made up the majority of ghost guns in cases charged

Data Comparison

	<u>2022</u>	<u>2023</u>	
Cases charged & disposed	799	833	↑
Cases charged statewide	547	444	↓
Cases charged in Providence County	486	370	↓
Cases involving magazines with capacity 11-30+	231	293	↑
Cases involving multiple firearms	144	172	↑
Cases involving ghost guns	66	99	↑
Cases involving magazines with capacity 30+	30	55	↑



Combating Violent Crime

The **Urban Violent Crime Initiative** is a prosecutor-led partnership with the Providence, Pawtucket, and Central Falls Police Departments, the Department of Corrections, and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives. Working together, prosecutors, investigators, and analysts are gathering data and intelligence, analyzing the information, and setting violent crime enforcement priorities.

In 2023, the General Assembly approved the Attorney General's budget proposal requesting dedicated resources to establish a **Cold Case Unit** in the Attorney General's Office that would provide for statewide management and advancement of cold cases. The newly established Cold Case Unit, comprised of dedicated prosecutors, investigators, and staff, is already at work, focusing solely on unsolved cold cases and supporting state and local police departments in their investigations.

In 2022, the Office's **National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN)** machine was connected to the NIBIN network and became fully operational, a most significant development in the Office's violent crime initiative. NIBIN machines allow the Office to analyze a shell casing from one shooting and identify connections between that shooting and any other shooting in the Northeast. This investment has allowed our Office to make crucial connections and help crack cases faster, getting guns and violent offenders off the street quicker than ever before.

We saw the advantages of NIBIN tracing in solving the recent murder case of 24-year-old **Miya Brophy-Baermann**, an innocent bystander shot and killed in a gang-related drive-by shooting on the East Side of Providence. Our Office was able to use the NIBIN database to trace a ghost gun uncovered during a routine motor vehicle stop to the weapon used in Brophy-Baermann's shooting. This crucial piece of evidence allowed our Office to successfully prosecute **Isaiah Pinkerton** (age 26), resulting in a double life sentence at the ACI.



A Proactive Approach

The Office of the Attorney General is laser-focused on **effective and aggressive enforcement** of our firearms laws, which requires **proactive measures** aimed at keeping guns out of the hands of criminals and preventing violent crime in the first place, as well as **prosecution and enforcement**, to ensure both accountability and deterrence.

This approach includes enforcement of laws meant to keep firearms out of the hands of those who have been convicted of a felony, or have been charged and are awaiting resolution. To that end, the Office has begun proactively investigating National Instant Background Check (NCIS) denials, resulting in charges in several cases alleging that defendants **falsified federal firearm applications** when attempting to purchase a weapon.

Moreover, the Office regularly conducts **undercover checks** of local arms dealers to ensure that they are following Rhode Island firearms laws. Most dealers adhere to the laws, and some have even mentioned that they are aware of the Office's checks. Knowing that our Office will be vigilantly and diligently enforcing has served a significant deterrent effect, engendering increased compliance.

Our Office has also recently established a new position - hiring a Director of **Community Violence Intervention and Prevention**. This new role will allow the Office to take a proactive approach to violence intervention, spearheading outreach to local community organizations and stakeholders, coordinating violence prevention efforts, and implementing both novel and evidence-based strategies and programs with the overall goal of creating safer communities. These are tools and methods our state previously did not utilize to full effect, and ones that will make significant impact.

Gun Laws in Action

Attorney General Neronha has repeatedly advocated for common-sense measures aimed at preventing gun violence in Rhode Island. The Office recognizes the legislature's efforts in passing important pieces of gun violence prevention legislation over the past few years. The Office of the Attorney General has put these newly enhanced laws to good use, while at the same time, continuing our aggressive enforcement of existing law. Below are some examples of gun laws and relevant 2023 cases resulting from those laws.

Ghost Guns

Ghost guns continue to be sought out more frequently by those who are otherwise prohibited from lawfully purchasing or possessing guns in Rhode Island. In 2023, our Office charged and disposed of 99 cases involving ghost guns.

On March 27, 2023, **Luis Roman** (age 32) was sentenced to serve 30 years at the Adult Correctional Institutions (ACI) for shooting at a Providence police officer with an AR-15-style ghost gun following a domestic assault against a female victim in 2021.

Straw Purchasing

In 2021, the General Assembly strengthened laws against straw purchasing, which occurs when a purchaser purchases or obtains a gun for another person, knowing that the other person is prohibited from possessing a firearm. These laws go right to the heart of ensuring that firearms don't fall into the wrong hands in Rhode Island.

On October 30, 2023, **Amado Duverge** (age 38) was convicted of straw-purchasing firearms and trafficking them to prohibited buyers.

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Large Capacity Magazines

In 2022, the General Assembly passed a bill banning large capacity feeding devices, and since then, our Office has begun charging cases under the new ban. In 2023, there were 293 cases involving magazines with a capacity between 11-30+.

On July 3, 2023, our Office charged **Elliott Knorr** (age 43), by way of criminal information, with 15 counts of possession of a ghost gun, two counts of possession of large capacity feeding devices, one count of firing in a compact area, and one count of conspiracy to fire in a compact area.

Firearms Applications

As previously mentioned, the General Assembly strengthened laws against straw purchasing, and in doing so, reaffirmed laws against lying on a firearm application.

On July 12, 2023, investigators from the Office of the Attorney General arrested **Keith Sartini** (age 56) for allegedly providing false information in order to secure a firearm following his attempt to buy two guns from a licensed firearms dealer in Tiverton in April 2023.

