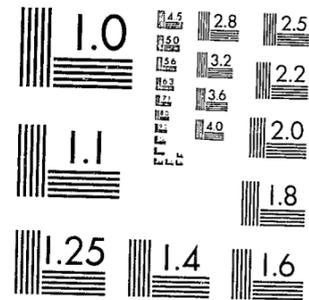


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WEAPONS POLICIES:

A Survey of Police Department Practices
Concerning Weapons and Related Issues

NCJRS

SEP 70 1981

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ABSTRACT

The Survey of Police Department Practices Concerning Weapons and Related Issues was conducted by the Social and Demographic Research Institute, University of Massachusetts/Amherst. This study analyzes the potential of local law enforcement agencies as a source of information about weapons and crime. It further describes the current summary report capabilities of the local departments and their willingness to comply with additional requests for summary information. The results of the survey are based on a national sample of 609 law enforcement agencies drawn with probabilities proportionate to the size of the department. The response rate to the mail questionnaire was over 70%. The results of the study generalize to the national law enforcement activity with respect to weapons practices.

The local law enforcement agencies represent a potential source of valuable information about weapons and crime in that the police deal directly with criminal incidents and often have the responsibility of administering local weapons regulations. The local departments in our survey report that detailed weapon information is currently recorded in the individual case reports of these crime events. Through the analysis of the actual standard report forms used by the local departments in our survey, we find that many departments use case report forms which would facilitate the retrieval of weapon information for summary report preparation.

In addition to recording detailed weapon information, the local departments report very high levels of use of the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) and much lower levels of use of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (BATF) weapons tracing systems. While some departments report problems with both systems, the NCIC system is given a higher overall rating of usefulness.

Although it is clear that the local departments currently record much weapon information, they are not likely to be preparing summary reports about weapons and crime topics beyond those required for the Uniform Crime Reports. The local departments are neither eager nor reluctant to comply with further requests for weapons and crime summary reports. The willingness to prepare such reports is a function of the local department's perception of the weapons and crime problem, the department's perception of their current summary report burdens, the number of weapons regulations administered by the local department, whether the department has its own computer installation and the ratio of support personnel to sworn officers. The analysis of the willingness of local departments to provide additional weapons and crime information shows that some incentives (financial support, computer software, model report forms), will probably be necessary to ease the burden of increased summary report requests. An expansion of the Uniform Crime Reports to include a special weapons and crime section would probably prove to be the most efficient way to gather more information.

CHAPTER ONE

LOCAL POLICE DEPARTMENT WEAPONS POLICIES AND INFORMATION:

AN OVERVIEW OF ISSUES AND FINDINGS

Firearms, their use in criminal activities and the control of weapons are all controversial issues in our society, as any casual glance at the population and scholarly literature would reveal. However, all sides of the multidimensional set of antagonists and protagonists likely would agree that better and more extensive data would help at a minimum to raise the level of debate, and perhaps, at a maximum, would settle some of the side arguments. Thus, while all agree that handguns are more likely to be used in such economically motivated crimes as robbery, the type of handguns that are used and how they have been obtained are facts that are not well known. Similarly, the extent to which stolen weapons are used in crimes, as opposed to those that are obtained through legitimate channels, is also not well known. Having more detailed information about weapons as related to crime would be useful to the debates, although this might not settle any but the relatively peripheral points of the debates.

As in the case of most types of information, data on weapons, their use in crimes, and the distribution system by which weapons are obtained, are not impossible to obtain, at least in principle. The main obstacles to complete data summary about weapons and crime are, of course, the cost and the efforts involved. This point is well illustrated by the current controversies involving the extent of the under-enumeration in the 1980 Census; demographers and statisticians know how to conduct a nearly perfect Census, one in which the errors of enumeration would be so low as to be trivial. The problem is that such a more complete Census would be considerably more expensive, perhaps of the order of twice the funds expended on the 1980 Census. The issue here is whether the additional

costs and efforts of obtaining more detailed information is justified by the benefits of the information.

Data collection efforts are always trying to follow a balanced strategy in which the best information for the resources available are obtained. A frequent tactic in such a strategy is to make use of the sources of information that have already been collected, at least partially and perhaps in raw, original form. These sources of data represent potentials that could be transformed into fruitful summary information with the investment of some amount of additional resources.

With respect to data on weapons and crimes, an important information source and opportunity is presented by the local law enforcement agencies in the country. The police directly deal with criminal incidents, with persons accused of crimes, with victims of crime and, in many areas, are given the responsibility of administering local weapon regulations. The records generated, maintained and archived by the local police in the course of their ordinary duties might, therefore, contain the raw ingredients for useful, informative and relatively accurate statistics on firearms and crime. Of course, even if the basic information for a useful statistical summary exists in police department records, such information cannot be generated at zero cost. There are costs that would have to be borne by the police officers who fill out the individual case reports, in the extra effort they would have to make to assure uniformity and accuracy of the weapons information. Departmental administrative personnel would have to compile records, code forms, prepare statistical summaries or computer data tapes. For some local departments, it can be assumed that such an additional effort may be very slight because such

detailed weapon information is already being recorded and compiled into summary reports for their own departmental use. For other departments that keep no complete records on weapons (beyond that required for such reports as the Uniform Crime Reports) and have no system currently ready to compile statistical summaries, the costs would be much higher.

The purpose of the survey described in this report is to investigate to what extent a strategy based on using existing police records would be efficient to provide more detailed information about weapons and crime. The survey centers around two main issues: First, what weapon information are the local police routinely collecting in their current case reports? Secondly, how willing and able would police departments be to process such information into a useful, national-level reporting system?

We can expect that police departments would vary in both of these respects. The inter-departmental variations in these record-keeping areas become of interest because of the varying responsibilities that different local departments bear. It might not matter much for assessing the potentialities of local police departments as sources of weapon information if the small departments do not compile much weapon data, since these small departments provide only a small portion of the total police effort of the nation.

For this reason, the sample of local law enforcement agencies in this study was chosen by probabilities proportionate to size; that is, the largest departments will be contributing the greatest proportion of weapon data and therefore, have the greatest chance of being included in our analysis. A simple random sample of all local law enforcement agencies would have produced a large number of small departments and

and very few large departments. Instead, our sample design (see Chapter 2) produces a sample of departments which represents the law enforcement effort in the nation (number of sworn officers) actually covered by the reported weapons policies and practices reported in our survey.

Thus, the assessment of the potentialities of police department records as a source of weapon information is based on a mail survey sent to a sample of 609 local law enforcement agencies, picked to represent fairly the contributions each department makes to the total local police effort in the nation. The final response rate was over 70%, with 449 departments returning completed questionnaires. In this report, our results are presented by department (policies as reported on the department's questionnaire), but the results more accurately represent the number of police who work in these departments.

A survey of this sort necessarily has to be somewhat conjectural in its findings. We have asked respondents in each local department to specify what they actually do in the areas of weapons records, report-writing and other police procedures concerning weapons. As we all know, there are many slips between good intentions and their actual fulfillment. Some of the responses to our questions can be expected to be somewhat different than what actually occurs in the day-to-day police work; these answers represent mainly the intentions and statements of official departmental regulations and procedures. We have not actually visited departments and seen the implementation of these regulations and procedures by the officers on duty.

We have also asked the respondent in the local departments in our survey to say what they might be willing to do, if asked to collect more

weapon information. We can expect that some who are willing now may not be so cordial in the future, and some who appear less than eager, may conscientiously comply with any further information requests from Washington, if they occur. The best we can claim for the survey's results is that they more or less mirror the general weapons procedures as reported by the local departments. With this survey, we do know more about the sensibility of a data strategy that would rely heavily on the weapon information in local departmental case reports and on the cooperation of the local police to systematically prepare summary reports.

Our analysis shows that the local departments in our survey are not, on the average, eager to cooperate with additional summary report requests. However, they also do not report much resentment against such future requests. The willingness of the local police to comply with additional information about weapons is, in part, a function of the perception of the local police of the seriousness of the weapons and crime problem, the department's current summary reporting activities and capabilities.

Our survey verifies that the local police see the problem of weapons and crime as a substantial part of their local crime problem; half of the departments report that the problem of crimes committed with weapons is substantial and a third report that there is a problem with illegal firearms in their jurisdictions. This seriousness is related to both region and size of department. Departments in the Northeast and North Central regions see less of a problem than do departments in the West and South. As expected, the larger departments report a more serious problem with weapons and crime than do the smaller departments.

The willingness to provide additional weapon information is also a function of the number of weapon regulations which the local police administer in their jurisdictions; the more weapon regulations performed by the local police, the more willing, on the average, are the local police to provide more summary information. Our results show that many local police departments are in areas where weapons are regulated by law; the level of regulation of the commerce of firearms, regulation of handguns and the legal requirement for investigations for firearms permits is high in many local police jurisdictions. Over three-quarters of the local departments in our survey report being in areas with regulation of firearm commerce; half of the departments report regulations of handguns required by law; and three-quarters report that investigations for firearms permits are legally required in their jurisdictions.

In areas where weapon regulations are required by law, the administration of certain types of weapon regulation is more likely to be done by the local police. In particular, the local police are most likely to administer the required handgun regulations and to perform the necessary investigations for firearms permits. Overall, the involvement of the local police in weapon regulations is fairly low; on the average, the police who are in areas where weapon regulations are required by law perform 3.8 of the 15 weapon regulations specified in our questionnaire, with the other regulations being done by some other agency in the jurisdiction.

The problem of weapons and crime and weapon regulations is described more fully in Chapter 3. Our analysis shows that those local departments that are concerned about the problem of weapons and crime and those

departments that are involved in the administration of weapon regulations are more willing to comply with future summary report requests about weapons and crime.

The analysis of the types of weapon information already being recorded by the local police in case reports shows that many departments are currently recording information which could provide useful data. Our survey asked the departments to specify the types of weapon information recorded in the case report in ten different situations where a weapon was involved. We expected that the type of information recorded might vary by situation. However, by their own account, the local police record most of the weapon information in the case report, regardless of the situation. The type of firearm, serial number, manufacturer, caliber, prior firearms record of the suspect and whether the firearm was loaded or fired is reported to be recorded in the case reports by all local departments. The only two categories of information which are not necessarily recorded are the value and the age of the firearm. The value of the firearm is often recorded in the situation of a report of a stolen weapon, while the age of the firearm is recorded in less than half of the case situations. Thus, according to the police respondents, the individual case reports within their local departments provide a potential wealth of detailed firearm information. Again, this analysis is based upon the department's reported standard procedures. We cannot tell if all officers always record all the firearm information.

If, as the police report, detailed weapon information is recorded in the case reports, the problem, then, becomes one of information retrieval. Is the weapon information recorded as part of a narrative

account of the crime or incident, or is there a separate section or question with categories where the weapon information is recorded? Our analysis of the standard report forms (incident, complaint, arrest, and property forms) actually used by the local departments in our survey shows that most use forms which, in part, facilitate the recording of and retrieval of weapon information.

Close to half of the local departments that returned standard report forms¹ use an incident report form with an open space or area labeled "WEAPON." Another third of the departments use an incident report form with a special box, code or category that explicitly requests weapon detail. On the report forms that request details, the type of weapon and type of firearm are most likely to be the information requested. Other information (such as caliber, serial number, age) is requested on only half of the incident report forms. An analysis of the standard property report forms shows a similar distribution; a third of these forms have an open area to describe property and about half request that specific details be entered about the property (i.e., firearm). On these property report forms, serial number, value and manufacturer are the details most frequently specified. Note that these details are the ones required for checks and reports made to the National Crime Information Center (NCIC).

Thus, our survey finds that useful, detailed weapon information is being recorded in the case reports by local police and that this information is, for many of the departments, in a form that would be fairly

¹Eighty-three percent of the local departments that responded to our survey submitted copies of their standard report forms.

easy to retrieve. It should be noted that, when asked to specify the changes that would be necessary to provide additional summary information about weapons, the most frequent answer is "New forms, or changes in existing forms." The local police seem to realize that their standard report forms could be changed to facilitate information retrieval (i.e., converting spaces labeled "Weapon Information" into more explicit questions, codes or categories). This type of change could easily be made, presumably with a small cost. The analysis of the willingness of the local police to provide additional summary information about weapons shows that use of good case report forms (i.e., standard forms with weapon detail explicitly requested) does not significantly affect willingness.

In addition to recording detailed weapon information, the local police in our survey report that other procedures are also standard when a weapon is involved in a case. All local departments report that a stolen gun is reported to the NCIC system and 83% report that a stolen gun would also be reported to a regional or local weapons tracing system.² This finding is much higher than found in Brill's (1977) study of stolen firearms where he finds that many stolen weapons are not reported to the NCIC. A discussion of the problems of reporting to NCIC is discussed more fully in Chapter 4, which shows all of the problems of "leakage" in reporting of stolen weapons to NCIC. The high number of local departments that say that it is a standard procedure to report stolen weapons to NCIC and a lower number of stolen weapons that actually get reported highlights

²The question in our survey specified that the serial number, model, etc., were known to the police in order to use the NCIC system.

the possible difference between official policy and procedure and actual practice.

However, our survey does show that 86% of the local police departments have their own NCIC terminal, with the remaining departments having access to NCIC through another agency. Almost all departments report that every firearm implicated in a crime or found, confiscated or recovered is checked with NCIC. Overall, three-quarters of the local departments rate their experience with NCIC as usually useful.

The reported use of the Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms weapons tracing system (ATF) is very low, according to the respondent's report of official procedures. Over half of the departments in our survey report that firearms are very seldom checked or never checked with ATF, whether involved in a crime situation or found, lost or recovered. Of the departments that reported some use of ATF, only a third rated their experience as useful.

It is clear from our findings that the NCIC system is the preferred system (as reported as official policy) and the one which is given the highest rating. We suspect that the ATF weapons tracing system is sometimes used as a back-up method when NCIC and local or state weapons tracing systems have failed.³ We expect that the use of NCIC could be increased within a department if the report forms included a section to record an NCIC check or report. A few local departments currently have such a form with questions on NCIC use, including the name of the officer who made the check, date, time and a description of the property checked.

³Although our questionnaire did not directly ask this question, some respondents noted this pattern of use in their marginal comments.

This type of record-keeping would help to ensure that the NCIC report or check was, in fact, made and that the results have been recorded.

The amount of current summary reporting done by local police departments appears to be mainly the areas covered by the Uniform Crime Reports. These reports are filed monthly and annually by local departments and provide some limited amount of weapon information; the number of homicides by type of weapon and type of firearm, the number of robberies and assaults by type of weapon and the number of arrests for illegal possession and other weapons crimes. With this limited information, many of the questions about the use of weapons and crime cannot be answered; such as the type of firearm typically used, the number of suspects armed at arrest, the legality of possession of a weapon at arrest, etc. The results from our survey show that some more detailed weapon information is currently being recorded by the local police. Do the local police currently prepare additional report summaries with more detailed information about weapons? The results from our survey tend to show that a majority of the local departments do not prepare aggregate report summaries on topics beyond those covered in the UCR reports. For example, only about a third of the departments prepare summary reports on the number of firearms stolen and on the number of firearms confiscated annually. The local departments that do not prepare summary reports on the weapon-related topics presented in our survey indicate, on the average, that the preparation of such reports would be neither easy nor difficult.

The amount of trouble caused by current report summary preparation is found to significantly affect the department's willingness to prepare

additional reports. Some local departments (about a quarter to one third in our sample) report that summary report preparation is very burdensome on personnel time and on the amount of details required on the case report forms. A similar proportion of local departments, however, report that current reports are no trouble at all in these two areas. Very few departments report that current report requirements are burdensome on their equipment costs.

The level of computerization of the local police department records is one indication of the department's summary reporting capability. To the extent that the arrest and crime reports are computerized, additional report summaries should be easier to obtain. Our survey finds that the trend of increasing use of a computer by local police has continued. Three-quarters of the local departments report that they have computerized the department's records; in particular, the level of computerized arrest and crime report records is quite high. Forty percent of the departments that use a computer report that their departments have their own separate computer installation. A separate computer installation within the department is negatively related to the amount of trouble caused by report preparation; that is, departments with their own computer system tend, on the average, to report less trouble. This variable is also significantly related to willingness to prepare additional report summaries; those departments with their own computer are more willing to prepare such reports. The regression analysis of the amount of trouble caused by reports and willingness to prepare reports is presented in more detail in Chapter 6.

When asked about any changes that would be necessary within their

department (such as record-keeping systems, personnel and budget) in order to comply with requests for more detailed weapon information summaries, four out of five local departments report that some amount of change would be necessary. Specifically, many report that changes in existing case report forms would have to be made or new forms introduced. Over half of the departments report that additional funds would have to be sought and special training of personnel conducted. Clearly, the departments recognize that new report summaries could not be delivered without some changes and without some additional financial support.

Our analysis has shown that the feasibility of using existing records within local police departments to gather more detailed summaries about weapons and crime would be fruitful. Many departments currently use report forms which request more weapon information than is found in existing aggregate summary reports (for example, the Uniform Crime Reports). Respondents in local departments report that they are concerned about the problem of weapons and crime and there is some level of willingness to provide additional information. However, it would probably be necessary to provide some incentive (financial support, computer software, model report forms) to the local police departments to ease the increased burden of additional reporting. An expansion of the Uniform Crime Report categories or the addition of a special Weapons and Crime report should prove to be the most efficient method for gathering additional weapons and crime information. Local departments are currently providing some weapon information through these UCR reports and are familiar with these reporting procedures. They also understand the introduction of new UCR report topics; for example, in 1979 a special report on arson was

introduced in response to the increased problem of this crime. The use of an existing data collection system would probably be less costly and better utilized than the establishment of a new organization to gather weapons and crime information.

CHAPTER 2

SAMPLE METHODOLOGY FOR POLICE DEPARTMENT SURVEY

There are over 19,000 local law enforcement agencies in the United States, ranging from the very large departments in New York and Los Angeles to small one- or two-man departments in rural areas. The policies of these departments with respect to the gathering and storing of weapons and crime data comprise the subject matter of this research, and thus police departments (rather than criminal justice jurisdictions, or police officers) are the appropriate units of analysis. How, then, are these 19,000 departments best sampled given our research aims?

A strategy of simple random sampling, where each of the 19,000 has an equal chance to appear in the sample, can be ruled out on fairly obvious grounds. Departments vary enormously in the total amount of policing they do, the number of officers, the size of the population served, and the number of weapons crimes that come to their attention. The Los Angeles Police Department, to note an obvious example, does several thousands of times more policing in any year than does, say, the Police Department of Amherst, Massachusetts. A sampling strategy that gave both these departments an equal chance to appear in the sample would therefore be foolish; what one wants instead is a strategy whereby the probability of inclusion is somehow proportional to the total amount of policing done.

To illustrate the problem even more dramatically, consider the 50 largest departments in the United States. These 50 departments represent about 0.3 percent of the total of 19,000 departments. Given a fixed sample size of about $N = 600$, a simple random sampling strategy would thus be expected to select one or two of the 50 largest for sample inclusion, even though these 50 departments do roughly a quarter to a third of

the total policing of the United States! Obviously, if these 50 large departments do something on the order of a quarter to a third of the total policing, then they should comprise something on the order of a quarter to a third of the sample; or in other words, we want to sample departments not in proportion to the total of 19,000 departments, but rather in proportion to the total policing done, indexed, in the present case, by either the number of officers in the department or the size of the population served.¹ With the sample defined in this way, the universe to which the results generalize becomes, not the total of U.S. police departments, but rather the total U.S. law enforcement effort.

With the need to sample disproportionately according to departmental size in mind, actual sample development and selection proceeded as follows. A sampling frame of all local law enforcement agencies in the United States was provided by LEAA. This list (available in machine readable form) was generated by a mail questionnaire administered to all agencies by the Bureau of the Census.² The data are totally updated through 1975 and partially since then. The file contains information on the type of agency, the size of the department, the population size of the jurisdiction and the geographic location (state, county, city and full address). The total data set contains information on 19,925 agencies. From this list, we excluded agencies with special jurisdictions (i.e., campus police,

¹The correlation between number of police and population size of the jurisdiction is quite high. The data from the LEAA file of all law enforcement agencies shows a .97 correlation for the municipal police and a .44 correlation for sheriff's departments between population and number of sworn police officers.

²The return rates from this mail questionnaire appear to have been quite high, especially for the large police departments.

coroners, harbor police, etc.) as being inappropriate to the analysis of weapons policies. The final sampling frame thus consisted of 16,423 county and municipal police and sheriff departments.

Because this list contains different types of law enforcement agencies, there are often cases of overlapping jurisdictions represented by these agencies. This problem is most likely to occur within a county where often there are both county sheriffs and one or more municipal police departments serving the same area. It is difficult from the LEAA data file to distinguish or identify these agencies based only on the population size of the jurisdiction. For this reason, we sampled counties as a first stage. By first drawing a county sample based on size of population, we have taken into account the fact that those areas with the greatest population and therefore the greatest amount of law enforcement effort should be more likely to be sampled.

Table 2-1 Panel A shows the sampling information about counties. It should be noted that the distribution of counties by population size is highly skewed. Although there are more than 3,100 counties in the United States, over 50% of the country's population live in the largest 155 counties and only 11% live in the smallest 1,816 counties. Since we have reasoned that the problem of weapon data collection is proportionate to the population of the jurisdiction served, it is clear that the bigger counties should have a higher probability of falling into the sample. For this reason, we decided to include in our study all of the 155 counties with over 250,000 population. The remaining counties were sampled with probabilities proportionate to their contribution to the total population of the United States. This proportionate sampling produced a total sample

Table 2-1

Universe Descriptions and Sampling Proportions Used in Drawing
Samples of Counties and Police Departments

A. Sampling Information for Counties:

Population Size of Counties	Number of Counties	Percent of US Population in Size Class	Sampling Proportion Used	Sampling Yield in Numbers
250,000 and over	155	52%	1.00	155
75,000 to 249,999	349	21	.18	63
25,000 to 74,999	814	16	.06	48
under 25,000	1795	11	.018	33
TOTAL =	3113	100%	TOTAL SAMPLE SIZE -----	<u>299</u>

B. Sampling Information for Police Departments:

Department Size	Number of Departments	Percent of Total Police in Size Class	Sampling Proportion Used	Sampling Yield in Numbers
500 and over	79	50.4%	1.00	79
90-449	378	24.6	1.00	378
40-89	508	10.3	.124	63
10-39	1737	12.1	.042	73
1-9	1540	2.6	.010	16
TOTAL =	4242	100%	TOTAL SAMPLE SIZE -----	<u>609</u>

size of 299 counties (52% of 299 counties = 155 counties in the largest size category). The sample N's in the remaining, smaller size categories are proportionate to their contribution to the total population distribution. For example, in the smallest size category, the N is 33 counties (11% of 299). The final sample of counties were randomly selected within the 3 remaining county size categories.

Once the county sample was chosen, we next examined the distribution of police departments within the sampled counties. There are 4,242 departments in the 299 sampled counties. The bottom panel of Table 2-1 shows the distribution of these departments by size categories of number of sworn police officers. Despite the fact that our sample of counties was chosen to favor the counties with the highest population counts, the distribution of police departments by size is also highly skewed. The 79 largest departments in these counties contain more than half of the total police officers and the largest 457 departments (the top 2 size categories) contain three fourths of the police. Only 2.5% of the total police force work in the 1540 small police departments. The majority of the law enforcement activity (represented by number of police) is done by roughly 10% of the departments in our sampled counties. For this reason, we again sampled departments with probabilities proportionate to size. If we had chosen a simple random sample of all departments, the majority of the cases in the survey would be the small departments which employ very few of the total police force and the largest departments would be a very small part of the sample. Instead, by sampling departments with probabilities based upon number of police, we have a sample of departments which is representative of the law enforcement effort and activities

in the United States. The results of this survey tend to reflect the policies of the departments with the greatest impact upon weapons policies, particularly with regard to weapon data collection.

The 457 departments in the top two size categories were all included in the final police department sample.³ Departments in the remaining smaller size categories were randomly selected with probabilities proportionate to their total police size. The final sample contained 609 police and sheriff departments.

It should be noted that this sampling scheme in essence weights each size stratum according to its proportional contribution to the total number of U.S. police officers. Thus, when the weighted results show (for example) that 50% of the sample believes the weapons crime to be an important part of their overall crime problem, it is more correct to say that "50% of the U.S. police work in departments where weapons crime is an important part of the overall crime problem" than it is to say "50% of all U.S. police departments say that weapons crime is an important part..." The former, however, is an exceedingly clumsy locution, and is potentially misleading in that our data come from departments and reflect departmental policies. For this reason, in discussing the results, we talk in terms of departments, even though the weighted sample is not proportionate with respect to the total number of departments, but only in respect to the total number of police officers.

³Since the largest 2 size categories were given equal probabilities of inclusion in the sample (100% of both were chosen) and they each have different proportions of total police, this second stage of the sample will not be self-weighting with respect to size. The calculation of the necessary weights for the analysis is fully described in Appendix B.

The problem of overlapping jurisdictions is still present among our sampled departments within certain of the chosen counties. However, one of the main control variables in the analysis is the size of the department. In areas where several law enforcement agencies may overlap, we assume that the size, and therefore the amount of police work and weapon data generated, will represent the share of the total law enforcement that each agency is responsible for.

Questionnaire Administration

Questionnaires were mailed to the departments on May 2, 1980. A copy of the questionnaire is found in Appendix A. By the end of May, 36% of the departments had returned completed questionnaires. At this point we mailed a postcard reminder to the remaining 64% of the departments. A second mailing (with another copy of the questionnaire) was made in June to the 50% of the departments that had not yet responded. As a final reminder, a mailgram was sent in August to the non-respondents. By the end of October, a total of 449 questionnaires had been received for a final response rate of 73.7%.⁴

In addition to the questionnaire, we requested that police departments return copies of the standard report forms that are used in their regular policing activities. Specifically, we were interested in the complaint, incident, arrest, investigation, case history and property report forms. An analysis of these forms would describe the type and detail of weapon

⁴Only 11 of the departments returned letters indicating that they refused to participate in the study. Two of these departments later completed the questionnaire.

information that is routinely called for on standard report forms. An examination of the variety of forms would also allow an analysis of the possibility and ease of information retrieval and aggregate summary report generation from these individual reports.

Although the return rate of completed questionnaires was good, there were many departments that failed initially to send any report forms. By the middle of the field work, only approximately 50% of the departments who had responded had included these report forms. In order to increase this response rate, we mailed a letter to these departments again requesting copies of their report forms. At the close of the field work we had received forms from 374 of the responding departments for a response rate of 83.3%.

Within the departments that submitted sample report forms, there is a wide range of the number and types of forms. Many small departments sent their single general purpose "Police Report Form" which is often a nearly blank sheet of paper. One large department sent over 70 different report forms, including such detailed forms as "Lost Bicycle," "Overdue Traffic Tickets," etc. Between these two extremes, we were able to obtain the basic standard report forms on which any weapon information might be requested as the result of an incident, arrest or property receipt. Some departments also submitted a copy of their training manual or the instructions given to officers regarding report writing.

For the analysis of weapon data collection, the forms from the departments were coded as to the type of forms used (i.e., open-ended narrative or closed, special report form) and the type and detail of weapon information specifically or generally requested on the forms. The variables and

codes are shown in detail in Appendix C. A complete analysis of these report forms and the types of weapon data available is presented in Chapter 5.

Questionnaire Return Rate

The final response rate for the mail questionnaire was 73.7%. This return rate is shown by department characteristics in Table 2-2. There are no very large differences found in the return rates by type of department or by region of the country, with the exception of the lower rate of 69% by departments in the Northeast. However, the distribution of percent returned by size of department does show some differences. The smallest departments were less likely to return a completed questionnaire than were the larger departments. This lower rate in the small departments is not a large concern since we are primarily interested in the departments with the greatest amount of police work. It is these departments that generate the greatest amount of crime information and potential weapon data. Also, the size category with the lowest return rate contains a very small number of cases -- 16 departments.

The final rate of return of standard report forms among the departments that responded to the questionnaire was 83.3%. Table 2-3 presents this response rate by the department characteristics. Again, these rates show that the departments in the Northeast have a lower response rate, and there is again some small relationship with the characteristics of the department. The departments from the Northeast were slightly less likely to return any report forms; the sheriff departments were less likely

Table 2-2

Police Department Questionnaire Return Rates by Department Characteristics

	<u>Percent Returned</u>	<u>N</u>
TOTAL	73.7%	609
<u>Region^a</u>		
West	78.0%	118
Northeast	69.1%	223
North Central	74.5%	141
South	77.2%	127
<u>Size of Department^b</u>		
1 to 9 officers	56.3%	16
10 to 39 officers	69.9%	73
40 to 89 officers	74.6%	63
90 to 499 officers	75.1%	378
500 or more officers	73.4%	79
<u>Type of Department^c</u>		
Municipal Police	73.9%	463
Sheriff and County Police	73.3%	146

^aU.S. Census Bureau region definitions.

^bNumber of sworn officers from LEAA data file.

^cObtained from LEAA data file.

Table 2-3

Return Rates of Standard Report Forms
by Department Characteristics

	Percent Returned	N ^d
TOTAL	83.3%	449
<u>Region^a</u>		
West	92.4%	92
Northeast	72.7%	154
North Central	86.7%	105
South	87.8%	98
<u>Size of Department^b</u>		
1 to 9 officers	66.7%	9
10 to 39 officers	80.4%	51
40 to 89 officers	87.2%	47
90 to 499 officers	82.0%	284
500 or more officers	91.4%	58
<u>Type of Department^c</u>		
Municipal Police	85.1%	342
Sheriff and County Police	77.6%	107

^aU.S. Census Bureau region definition.

^bNumber of sworn officers from LEAA data file.

^cObtained from LEAA data file.

^dN is the number of departments that returned a questionnaire.

to return forms than were the municipal departments.⁵ The lowest rate is found among the smallest law enforcement departments, which is a very small number of cases.

The high response rate among departments allows an analysis of the types of weapon data actually requested on standard crime and arrest report forms. As shown in later chapters, departments report that all details about weapons are actually recorded in the case reports. The use of the standard report forms will allow an analysis of the possibility and ease of data retrieval from different types of report forms.

Police Department Respondents

Before turning to a description of the departments in the analysis, a description of the police department respondents should be noted. We instructed in the cover letter which was enclosed with the questionnaire that the police chief or sheriff should answer the questions or that this task should be delegated to a person who was familiar with the department's standard weapons policies. Table 2-4 presents a description of the respondents by rank or title or section of the department.⁶ The respondents who completed the questionnaire are clearly within the higher levels of local police department administrations; 16% of the respondents are police chiefs; almost a third of the respondents are lieutenants or

⁵Some sheriffs and county police noted in their returned questionnaire that they had no standard report forms because they performed little in this area of law enforcement.

⁶Many respondents included only their position or rank with the department. For those who also included their assigned office (i.e., Captain J. Doe, Technical Services), we coded their office instead of rank.

Table 2-4

Rank or Office of Police Department Respondents

N = 449

<u>Rank or Office^a</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Police Chief	16.7%
Sheriff	1.2
Assistant Chief/Sheriff	7.4
Lieutenant	12.5
Captain	9.7
Sergeant	7.4
Commander	2.5
Officer	3.7
Administrative officer	6.3
Detective	3.0
Secretary/Other person	3.4
Records office	3.2
Weapons/Ballistics	2.8
Planning/Research	11.1
Technical Services	2.8
Training Division	4.4
Other office or division	1.8

^aWhen a respondent provided both a rank and an office or division within the department, the office was coded (i.e., Captain J. Doe, Technical Services).

captains. Eleven percent of the respondents are assigned to the Planning and Research Division of their department. In addition to being familiar with the weapons policies and procedures of their department, the respondents in this survey are in a position to offer valid opinions on the attitude questions contained in the questionnaire.

For several of the local departments, we received copies of inter-departmental memoes and other indications that the questionnaire had been circulated within the department. For example, someone from the records office or management information section would be asked to complete certain sections of the questionnaire which related to computerization and departmental records.

Description of Local Departments in the Analysis

Table 2-5 presents a description of the basic departmental characteristics for the 449 departments in our study. The characteristics shown are 1) size of the department in number of sworn officers, 2) region of the country, and 3) the type of department (municipal police vs. sheriff and county police).

There is some relationship between size of department and region. The departments from the West and the South are more likely to be larger departments than are the Northeastern departments; only 25.8% of the departments from the Northeast have 500 or more officers while 68.4% of the departments from the South are this large. Sheriff and county police departments are also more likely to be large departments (63% of the sheriff and county police vs. 46.2% of the municipal police have

Table 2-5

Description of Surveyed Police and Sheriff Departments

Size of Department	Total	REGION				TYPE OF DEPARTMENT	
		West	North East	North Central	South	Municipal	Sheriff
1-9	2.9%	0%	3.6%	5.4%	2.2%	3.4%	1.3%
10-39	12.0	5.9	20.1	13.0	8.1	14.7	3.8
40-89	10.2	4.3	20.2	11.0	4.5	12.2	4.4
90-499	24.5	29.5	30.3	22.9	16.8	23.5	27.5
500 or more	50.4	60.3	25.8	47.7	68.4	46.2	63.0
N =	(449)	(91)	(121)	(106)	(131)	(338)	(111)

Type of Department	Total	REGION			
		West	North East	North Central	South
Municipal Police	75.2%	79.0%	79.7%	80.3%	64.4%
Sheriff and County Police	24.8	21.0	20.3	19.7	35.6
N =	(449)	(91)	(121)	(106)	(131)

more than 500 sworn officers). The distribution of type of department by region (bottom of Table 2-5) shows no real difference, except in the South, where there is a higher percentage of sheriffs and county police (35.6%) than found in other regions.

Our analysis is represented by law enforcement agencies from all regions of the country, different sizes of departments and different types of departments. Throughout this report, we will refer to the units of this analysis as "local departments," "police," and "law enforcement agencies." The reader is reminded that this sample includes municipal police, sheriffs and county police. In the cases where this distinction is informative, the type of department will be introduced at that point as a control variable.

Again, the reader is reminded that although the units of analysis are local police departments, the results reflect the policies and practices of the "policing effort" of the nation. Our results do not generalize to all departments, but instead generalize to the universe of law enforcement effort and activities as represented in these local police departments.

CHAPTER 3
WEAPONS AND CRIME PROBLEM AND
WEAPON REGULATIONS

Problem of Weapons and Crime

The problem of crimes committed with weapons is a major one in the United States and dealing with these crimes is a major function of local law enforcement agencies. For the purposes of this analysis, it is important to understand the perceptions of the police of this problem.

Many of the police in our survey consider the problem of crimes committed with weapons to be a substantial part of the total crime problem in their jurisdiction (Table 3-1). Overall, ten percent report it to be a very big part of the total crime problem and another 36.8% report it as a substantial part of the crime problem. Most of the additional departments respond that weapons and crime are not a substantial part of all crimes, with only 10% reporting no problem at all with weapons and crime. However, there is variation in this assessment by departmental characteristics.

The incidence of crimes committed with weapons varies by the region of the United States with the South and the West generally showing the highest rates.¹ This pattern is similar to the perceptions of police respondents by region. The departments in the West and the South are more likely to judge the problem of weapons and crime as serious than those from the Northeast and North Central regions. Two thirds of the departments in the West and over half of the departments in the South report a problem with crimes committed with weapons (combining the first

¹See Wright and Rossi et al., "Weapons, Crime and Violence in America: A Literature Review and Research Agenda," 1980, for a full discussion of the variation in the rates of violent crime by region.

Table 3-1

The Problem of Crimes Committed with Firearms^a
by Region and Size of Department

Problem Rating	Total	Region ^b			
		West	North East	North Central	South
Very Big Part of our Total Problem	10.7%	15.2%	9.7%	2.2%	15.6%
Substantial Part of our Total Problem	36.8	51.9	18.8	35.8	43.0
Not a Substantial Part of our Total Problem	41.5	30.4	47.8	52.1	35.1
Not Really a Problem	10.9	2.5	23.7	9.9	6.3
N =	(440)	(90)	(115)	(106)	(130)

Problem Rating	Total	Size of Department ^c				
		1-9	10-39	40-89	90-499	500+
Very Big Part of our Total Problem	10.7%	0%	0%	2.1%	6.9%	17.5%
Substantial Part of our Total Problem	36.8	12.5	13.7	10.6	36.7	49.1
Not a Substantial Part of our Total Problem	41.5	25.0	49.0	61.7	51.6	31.6
Not really a Problem	10.9	62.5	37.3	25.5	4.7	1.8
N =	(440)	(12)	(54)	(46)	(106)	(222)

^aThe question is "Considering all the various crimes your department has to deal with in the course of its day-to-day activities, how big a problem would you say crimes committed with firearms are in your jurisdiction?"

^bU.S. Census Bureau region definitions

^cNumber of sworn law enforcement officers from LEAA data file.

two categories in Table 3-1) compared to only 28.6% of the departments in the Northeast. A surprising 23.7% of the departments in the Northeast report that crimes committed with firearms are not really a problem in their jurisdictions.

The bottom panel of Table 3-1 shows the weapons crime problem by department size. The smallest law enforcement departments see no real problem with crimes committed with weapons in their jurisdictions. Over half of the smallest departments and 37.3% of those with 10 to 39 officers report no problem at all in this area. Only 1.8% of the largest departments report no problem while two-thirds of them see the problem as very big (17.5%) or substantial (49.1%). This direct relationship with size of police department is probably a reflection of the increased amount of weapons crimes which the larger departments see in their law enforcement activities.

The related area of weapons crime which the police see is illegal firearms traffic (weapons thefts, illegal sale, etc.) Table 3-2 shows the perception of this problem by departmental characteristics. The distribution of the seriousness of this problem is very similar to the problem of crimes committed with weapons. Again, ten percent of the departments report illegal firearms as a very serious problem and 29.3% see it as a somewhat serious problem (the combined percent is slightly lower than for the problem of crimes committed with weapons). The pattern shown by region and size of department is also similar to the crime with weapons problem. The departments in the West and the South are least likely to report no problem with illegal firearms (4.9% and 5.2%, respectively) while 29.9% of the Northeast departments

Table 3-2
The Problem of Illegal Firearms Traffic^a
by Region and Size of Department

Problem Rating	Total	Region ^b			
		West	North East	North Central	South
Very Serious Problem	10.2%	9.6%	11.6%	2.0%	16.1%
Somewhat Serious	29.3	48.0	10.3	28.5	33.5
Not Too Serious	46.9	37.5	48.3	55.5	45.2
No Problem at All	13.6	4.9	29.9	14.0	5.2
N =	(440)	(89)	(114)	(106)	(130)

Problem Rating	Total	Size of Department ^c				
		1-9	10-39	40-89	90-499	500 +
Very Serious Problem	10.2%	0%	2.0%	2.1%	3.7%	17.5%
Somewhat Serious	29.3	12.5	13.7	14.9	25.6	38.6
Not Too Serious	46.9	37.5	37.3	59.6	57.5	42.1
No Problem at All	13.6	50.0	47.1	23.4	13.2	1.8
N =	(440)	(12)	(54)	(46)	(106)	(222)

^aThe question is "How big a problem to your department is illegal traffic in firearms (for example, circulation of stolen weapons, weapons thefts, black marketeering in illegal firearms, etc.)?"

^bU.S. Census Bureau region definitions

^cNumber of sworn law enforcement officers from LEAA data file

see no problem at all. However, 11.6% of the departments from the Northeast see a very serious problem with illegal firearms in their jurisdictions. This figure is probably from the large departments in this region. Of the departments in the North Central region, a majority (55%) report the illegal firearms problem as not too serious.

The perception of this illegal firearms problem by size of department is shown in the bottom panel of Table 3-2. The majority of the small departments (50% and 47.1% of the two small size categories) see no problem at all with illegal firearms. Only 1.8% of the largest departments report no problem while 17.5% report that illegal firearms are a very serious problem in their areas.

Table 3-3 presents a regression of the average crime problem rating on departmental characteristics. The dependent variable is an average of the rating of the problem of crimes committed with weapons and the rating of the illegal firearms traffic problem, where the highest value (4) represents "very serious problem" and the lowest value (1) is "no problem". This analysis confirms the earlier relationships of these problems with region and size of department. The net effect of region shows that departments from the Northeast and the North Central regions give less serious ratings to this problem than do departments from the South. The size of the department also affects the perceived seriousness of the weapons and crimes problem. The coefficients for the larger departments are positive in comparison to the small departments (1 to 39 officers); larger departments rate the weapons crime problem as more serious, on the average, than do the smallest departments. The effect of region and size of department are independent of the type of

Table 3-3

Regression of Average Firearms Crime Problem^a
on Department Characteristics

<u>Independent Variables</u>	Dependent Variable is Average Crime Problem Rating ^a	
	<u>b</u>	<u>SE</u>
<u>Region^b</u>		
West	.01	.09
Northeast	-.29 ***	.08
North Central	-.30 ***	.08
<u>Size of Department^c</u>		
40 to 89 officers	.24 *	.12
90 to 499 officers	.64 ***	.10
500 or more officers	1.04 ***	.09
Municipal police department ^d	.35 ***	.07
CONSTANT	1.59 ***	.11
R ² = .34		
N = 440		

^a Average of the two crime problem ratings (see Tables 3-1 and 3-2) coded 1 = no problem to 4 = very serious problem.

^b U.S. Census Bureau definition. Omitted category is "South".

^c Number of sworn officers from LEAA. Omitted category is "1 to 39 officers".

^d Omitted category is "Sheriff and County Police".

* indicates statistical significance at .05

*** indicates statistical significance at .001

department, municipal police department vs. sheriff and county police. Municipal police departments, on the average, rate these weapons crime problems as more serious than do sheriffs and county police.

The perceived seriousness of the weapons and crime problem then is related to those departmental characteristics which are related to the incidence of violent crime; departments from the South rate the problem as most serious; the largest departments see the problem as more serious; and municipal police departments give a more serious rating to this problem.

Weapons Regulations

The legal regulation of weapons in society has been one attempt to control the problem of weapons and crime. There is a wide variety of regulations covering the sale, possession and registration of weapons in the United States at both the Federal and local level. In order to understand the weapons policies of local police and sheriff departments, we must first describe the weapon regulations which are currently in existence in local police jurisdictions. The type and amount of regulation in a department's jurisdiction affects its own weapon policies and weapons data collection efforts.

Table 3-4 shows the weapon regulations that are required by state and local laws in local police jurisdictions. There is a wide variation in the kinds of gun regulations currently required, including regulation of the sale of weapons, requirements for permits to purchase or possess a weapon, etc. In addition, there are certain types of weapon regulation activities which the police departments themselves are required to perform and enforce.

Table 3-4

Firearms Regulations Required by Law and Done by the Police

REGULATION	REQUIRED BY LAW			NOT REQUIRED BY LAW		TOTAL DONE BY POLICE ^b	Not Done	Unsure	N
	Done by Own	Other	TOTAL ^a	Done by Own	Other				
<u>Firearms Sales</u>									
License Firearms Wholesalers	10.6%	71.5	82.1	0.1	0.9	10.7	14.4	2.5	(439)
License Firearms Retailers	21.9%	64.1	86.0	0	0.9	21.9	10.5	2.5	(442)
Investigate Retailers	29.7%	54.1	83.8	1.1	1.1	30.8	9.2	4.9	(439)
Issue License to Sell	8.3%	54.6	62.9	0.1	3.4	8.4	25.1	8.5	(441)
<u>Long Guns</u>									
Issue License to Purchase	13.7%	17.1	30.8	1.2	0.9	14.9	62.6	3.5	(442)
Issue License to Possess	11.8%	13.2	25.0	0.7	0.9	12.5	70.7	2.8	(442)
Register Long Guns	8.9%	17.3	26.2	15.6	3.2	24.5	52.5	2.5	(434)
<u>Handguns</u>									
Issue License to Purchase	32.3%	22.7	55.0	1.5	1.6	33.8	39.7	2.1	(444)
Issue License to Possess	26.0%	24.4	50.4	0.4	0.7	26.4	48.3	0.3	(443)
Register Handguns	28.9%	26.8	55.7	15.1	2.0	44.0	25.4	1.9	(443)

(continued next page)

Table 3-4 (continued)

	REQUIRED BY LAW			NOT REQUIRED BY LAW		TOTAL DONE BY POLICE ^b	Not Done	Unsure	N
	Done by Own	Other	TOTAL ^a	Done by Own	Other				
<u>Other Regulations</u>									
Investigate Persons Applying for Firearms Permit	44.2%	25.8	70.0	2.6	1.2	46.8	25.0	1.2	(438)
Issue Permit to Carry Firearm Openly	18.1%	23.2	41.3	0.2	0.8	18.3	56.6	1.1	(442)
Issue Permit to Carry Concealed Firearm	37.7%	32.7	70.4	0.5	0.4	38.2	28.4	0.4	(443)
Investigate Persons Applying for Permit to Carry Firearms	51.8%	18.2	70.0	1.6	0.2	53.4	26.8	1.5	(443)
Issue Hunting Licenses	1.9%	83.3	85.2	0.4	2.2	2.3	11.1	1.1	(441)

Percentages computed across rows

^aTotal required by law (regardless of agency that does the regulation). Sum of first two columns

^bTotal done by police (regardless if required by law or not). Sum of first and fourth columns.

The highest level of local regulation is in the area of hunting licenses. Most local departments (85.2%) report that there is a legal requirement in their area to have a license for hunting. However, few departments (only 1.9%) become involved in this area of regulation; this function is performed mainly by other agencies, such as the state or local game or hunting commission.

Regulation of the wholesalers and retailers of firearms is another area in which there is a high amount of regulation.² Most departments report that licenses of wholesalers and retailers of firearms are legally required (82.1% and 86.0%, respectively). In the large majority of these cases, these functions are more likely to be performed by another agency than by the police (the 1968 Gun Control Act requires licensing of wholesalers and retailers by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms at the Federal level). The one activity in this area of sales which is most likely to be performed by the police is the investigation of retailers applying to become retailers (30.8% of the local departments report this regulation activity for themselves).

The regulation of long guns shows the lowest level of activity. A majority of local law enforcement agencies state that long gun regulations are not required in their jurisdictions; 62.6% report no need for a license to purchase a long gun and 52.5% have no legal requirements for long gun registration. In those areas which do have legal regulation on long guns, the police are less likely to perform these functions than other agencies. It is interesting to note that 15.6% of the departments

²In addition to the 1968 Gun Control Act, there are local and state laws which require that outfits which are firearms dealers must be regulated and licensed.

report that they register long guns although it is not a legal requirement in their jurisdictions. This is probably a result of citizens who register their long guns with the local police in case of theft of the weapon.

The level of regulation of handguns is much higher than of long guns. About half of the local departments report there is a legal requirement in their jurisdiction to have a license to purchase or possess a handgun and 55.7% report that the handgun must be registered. In the areas where such handgun regulations exist, the police are slightly more likely to perform these functions than are other agencies. Handgun regulation shows a high level of police department activity with 33.8% of all departments stating that they issue permits to purchase a handgun, 26.4% issue permits to possess a handgun and 28.9% are required by law to register handguns. The registration of handguns also shows a sizable number of police departments (15.1%) that perform this registration function although it is not required by law. As with long guns, this registration activity is probably for citizens who are concerned about the possible theft of the handgun.³

The remaining four areas of gun regulation in Table 3-4 deal with the requirement of permits to carry firearms and the investigation of persons who have applied for firearms permits. These regulations are required by law in one half to two-thirds of the jurisdictions of local police departments. Also, these regulations show the highest level of police activity. Half (51.8%) of the departments report that they are

³From this survey, we cannot tell if these departments are attempting to register all handguns or long guns or are, instead, merely willing to register guns for anyone who happens to request such regulation.

required to investigate applications for permits to carry a firearm and 44.2% are required by law to conduct investigations for applications to purchase or possess a firearm. Another small percent of the departments (1.6% and 2.6%) voluntarily perform these two investigation functions. It is not surprising that these types of weapons regulations are most likely to be performed by the local police, since they would have best access to such information as prior arrest records and convictions for gun violations; information which would be pertinent to a weapons permit application.

The amount of weapon regulation varies across the regions of the country. Table 3-5 presents the percentage of departments that reported a weapon regulation required by law in their local jurisdiction.

The level of regulation of the wholesalers and retailers of firearms is high across all regions. The departments in the North Central region have the lowest level, although roughly three-quarters of the departments from this region report being in an area with the regulation of those who sell firearms.

The Northeast is the region of the country with the highest percentage of police departments in areas with long gun and handgun regulation. The North Central region shows the next highest percentages; slightly fewer departments are in areas with handgun regulations and only half as many departments as in the Northeast are covered by long gun regulation. The departments in the West are least likely to be in areas with local regulation of long guns and handguns. The percentages in the South are slightly higher than found in the West.

The other types of gun regulations show somewhat similar patterns. Police departments in the Northeast are very likely to be in areas that

Table 3-5

Percent of Departments in Areas with Weapon Regulations Required by Law^a by Region

	Total	West	North East	North Central	South
<u>Firearms Sales</u>					
License Wholesalers	82.1%	91.6%	78.8%	77.1%	82.9%
License Retailers	86.0%	93.5%	89.2%	77.5%	85.0%
Investigate Retailers	83.8%	88.3%	90.8%	73.3%	82.7%
License to Sell Ammun.	62.9%	70.9%	68.7%	53.1%	60.3%
<u>Long Gun Regulation</u>					
License to Purchase	30.8%	14.9%	58.1%	28.5%	18.0%
License to Possess	25.0%	6.6%	53.6%	22.8%	12.5%
Register Long Guns	26.2%	18.9%	42.4%	14.7%	25.3%
<u>Handgun Regulation</u>					
License to Purchase	55.0%	17.2%	86.1%	73.5%	36.7%
License to Possess	50.4%	19.0%	88.8%	62.9%	25.6%
Register Handguns	55.7%	38.0%	72.4%	64.9%	44.3%
<u>Other Regulations</u>					
Investigate application for firearms permit	70.0%	52.9%	93.7%	69.6%	59.0%
Issue permit to carry firearm openly	41.3%	19.2%	73.8%	26.7%	38.3%
Issue permit to carry concealed firearm	70.4%	81.0%	94.7%	45.1%	61.5%
Investigate application for permit to carry	70.0%	75.9%	95.0%	46.6%	62.3%
Issue Hunting Permits	85.2%	93.1%	83.0%	78.1%	87.8%
N ^b =					
Mean number of Weapon Regulations required	8.8	7.4	11.5	8.1	7.8

^a Weapon Regulation required by law, regardless of agency that performs it.

^b N's shown are the minimum base N for percentage calculations in that column.

require firearms permits to carry and an investigation of persons applying for firearms permits. Particularly in the area of the requirement of a permit to openly carry a firearm, less than half as many departments in the other regions have such a local regulation.

The bottom of Table 3-5 shows the average number of weapon regulations required by law in local police jurisdictions by region. Overall there are 8.8 of the 15 weapon regulations required on the average; in the Northeast, there are over 11 different weapon regulations required by law on the average.

Weapon Regulations Done by Local Police

In addition to the varying amounts and kinds of weapon regulations required by law in local police jurisdictions, there are distinct types of regulations which the police departments themselves perform or enforce. Given that a local area has a particular weapon regulation, what type of police department becomes involved (or is legally required to become involved) with performing the regulatory task?

Table 3-6 shows the percentage of departments that do the weapon regulations in areas where that weapon regulation is required by law.⁴ For example, of the 361 local departments that are in areas where wholesalers of firearms must be licensed, only 13% of the departments themselves perform this regulation. For the remainder, the regulation of wholesalers is done by some other agency. This table shows that the police have the highest level of regulatory activity in the areas of

⁴These percentages are computed as the number of departments performing the regulation over the number of departments in areas with that regulation required by law. Eliminated are the categories of "Not done in jurisdiction" and "Done by other agency - not required by law".

Table 3-6
Percent of Police Departments That Perform Weapons Regulations
in Areas Where Regulations Are Required
by Region

	Total	West	North East	North Central	South
<u>Firearms Sales</u>					
License Wholesalers	13% (361)	27% (76)	15% (94)	13% (81)	1% (109)
License Retailers	26% (381)	43% (81)	33% (106)	16% (82)	13% (111)
Investigate Retailers	36% (372)	44% (77)	44% (109)	31% (79)	27% (107)
License to Sell Ammo.	13% (278)	15% (62)	26% (82)	10% (56)	2% (79)
<u>Long Gun Regulations</u>					
License to Purchase	46% (141)	18% (14)	73% (70)	28% (30)	16% (27)
License to Possess	48% (113)	89% (7)	71% (66)	8% (24)	0% (16)
Register Long Guns	58% (181)	86% (50)	48% (58)	37% (20)	53% (53)
<u>Handgun Regulations</u>					
License to Purchase	60% (251)	47% (16)	66% (104)	66% (80)	42% (52)
License to Possess	52% (225)	80% (17)	67% (108)	43% (67)	8% (33)
Register Handguns	62% (313)	79% (66)	52% (97)	68% (79)	54% (71)

continued next page

N's is () are base N's for percentage calculation for that cell. This the number of local departments that are in an area with that weapon regulation legally required.

Table 3-6 (continued)

<u>Other Regulations</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>West</u>	<u>North East</u>	<u>North Central</u>	<u>South</u>
Investigate application for firearms permit	64% (318)	39% (45)	84% (113)	66% (78)	50% (82)
Issue permit to carry firearm openly	44% (183)	86% (17)	48% (88)	33% (29)	29% (50)
Issue permit to carry concealed firearm	54% (314)	91% (71)	53% (114)	51% (49)	24% (80)
Investigate application for permit to carry	75% (317)	89% (70)	86% (114)	84% (52)	40% (81)
Issue Hunting Permits	3% (378)	0% (81)	3% (99)	3% (84)	4% (114)
Mean Number of Weapon Regulations Done by Local Police Departments	3.8	4.2	6.0	3.2	1.9

investigation of persons applying for a firearms permit, registration of firearms and in the areas of handgun regulations.

The pattern of police department involvement in weapon regulation by region shows that generally the police departments in the South are much less likely to regulate weapons (the regulation is done by other agencies) in comparison to departments in other regions. The exception to this pattern is found in the registration of weapons (particularly long gun registration where 53% of the Southern departments perform this regulation). Note that this regional variation in the amount of weapon regulation done by local police departments is independent of the regional variation in the amount of weapon regulation required by law.

As one might expect, there is some variation in the amount of weapon regulation done by size of police department. Certainly, the larger departments may have more manpower available to perform these duties. However, it may also be that the larger departments are able to resist acceptance of such regulatory functions. As Table 3-7 shows, for many of the types of weapon regulations, there is little variation in the percentages of departments that regulate weapons by size of department. For example, in the areas where there is a legal requirement to investigate applications for a permit to carry a firearm, roughly three-quarters of the departments within each size category report that they perform this investigation.

In the police jurisdictions where a license is required to purchase or possess a long gun, the middle sized departments have the highest level of activity, while only a quarter of the largest departments deal

Table 3-7

Percent of Police Departments That Perform Weapons Regulations
in Areas Where Regulations Are Required
by Size of Department

	Total	1-9	Size of Department ^a			
			10-39	40-89	90-499	500 +
<u>Firearms Sales</u>						
License Wholesalers	13% (361)	17% (9)	10% (41)	9% (42)	12% (85)	15% (183)
License Retailers	26% (381)	17% (9)	13% (41)	25% (43)	23% (92)	30% (195)
Investigate Retailers	36% (372)	14% (10)	38% (42)	46% (42)	37% (87)	35% (191)
License to Sell Ammo.	13% (278)	0% (7)	9% (35)	23% (38)	12% (77)	13% (121)
<u>Long Gun Regulations</u>						
License to Purchase	46% (141)	50% (6)	62% (25)	68% (22)	49% (34)	29% (55)
License to Possess	48% (113)	33% (4)	65% (21)	82% (17)	51% (28)	27% (43)
Register Long Guns	58% (181)	0% (3)	48% (27)	53% (19)	63% (40)	62% (94)
<u>Handgun Regulations</u>						
License to Purchase	60% (251)	50% (9)	58% (40)	61% (32)	54% (61)	64% (109)
License to Possess	52% (225)	57% (10)	54% (35)	65% (25)	57% (57)	44% (98)
Register Handguns	62% (313)	33% (9)	57% (37)	53% (33)	64% (74)	66% (160)

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N's in () are base N's for percentage calculations for that cell.
This is the number of local departments that are in an area with that
weapon regulation legally required.

^aNumber of sworn police officers from LEAA data file.

Table 3-7 (continued)

	Total	1-9	Size of Department ^a			
			10-39	40-89	90-499	500 +
<u>Other Regulations</u>						
Investigate application for firearms permit	64% (318)	57% (10)	69% (45)	75% (35)	69% (76)	59% (152)
Issue permit to carry firearm openly	44% (183)	25% (6)	35% (28)	43% (21)	46% (48)	48% (82)
Issue permit to carry concealed firearm	54% (314)	50% (9)	33% (38)	48% (32)	58% (87)	58% (148)
Investigate application for permit to carry	75% (317)	67% (9)	76% (43)	78% (35)	76% (86)	73% (144)
Issue Hunting Permits	3% (378)	17% (9)	2% (43)	2% (40)	3% (94)	2% (191)
Mean Number of Weapon Regulations Done by Local Police Departments	3.8	3.1	4.1	4.7	4.0	3.5

with such long gun regulation. This is an example of the type of weapon regulation which the larger departments may successfully resist or delegate to another agency in their area.

A regression of the number of weapon regulations done by local police departments on department characteristics and the number of weapon regulations required by law is shown in Table 3-8. The number of weapon regulations required by law in the jurisdiction is included in this regression as an independent variable to control this effect. With the exception of handgun and long gun registration, very few departments perform any type of weapon regulation unless it is required by law. This regression analysis then shows the type of department which is more likely to regulate weapons, given that a weapon regulation is legally required.

The coefficient for number of weapon regulations required by law is .21; for every 5 weapon regulations required, local police departments will, on the average, perform one of them. This effect is net, regardless of region, size of department or type of department.

The coefficients for the department characteristics confirm earlier tabular analysis. The departments from the Northeast perform 3.36 more weapons regulations than do Southern police departments and the effects of the West and North Central regions are also positive in comparison to the South, although smaller than for the departments from the Northeast. There is no significant difference between the smallest police departments and the middle sized departments in the number of weapon regulations performed. However, the largest departments perform, on the average, .8 more regulations than do the smallest departments. This difference by size of department is quite small. Municipal police departments do

Table 3-8

Regression of Number of Weapon Regulations Done^a by Departments on Department Characteristics

<u>Independent Variables</u>	Dependent Variable is Number of Weapon Regulations Done by Local Police	
	<u>b</u>	<u>SE</u>
Number of Weapon Regulations Required by Law in Jurisdiction ^b	.21 ***	.04
<u>Region^c</u>		
West	2.21 ***	.39
Northeast	3.36 ***	.40
North Central	1.09 ***	.37
<u>Size of Department^d</u>		
40 to 89 officers	.34	.54
90 to 499 officers	.44	.44
500 or more officers	.81 *	.41
Municipal Police Department ^e	1.22 ***	.32
CONSTANT	-1.16 *	.56
R ² = .31		
N = 449		

^aCount of 15 weapon regulations done by local police (see Table 3-1).

^bCount of 15 weapon regulations required by law (see Table 3-1).

^cU.S. Census Bureau Definition. Omitted category is "South".

^dNumber of sworn officers. Omitted category is "1 to 39 officers".

^eOmitted category is "Sheriff and County Police".

* indicates statistical significance at .05
*** indicates statistical significance at .001

1.22 more weapon regulations than do sheriff and county police departments. This effect of type of department is net of size of department.

This analysis of weapon regulations has focused to this point on the types of departments that are more likely to regulate weapons if required by law. In Table 3-1 we noted that 15% of all departments registered handguns and 15% registered long guns in jurisdictions where this function was not legally required. What departments are doing this voluntary registration? Is there a relationship to other types of weapon regulations required by law or done by the department?

A regression in Table 3-9 presents an analysis of the local departments in areas with no legal requirement of either handgun or long gun registration. The dependent variable in each regression is a binary variable of registering handguns or long guns. Included in these two equations are the characteristics of local departments and the number of other weapon regulations done by the department. There are 203 local departments in areas that do not legally require handgun registration and 355 departments in areas with no long gun registration requirements.

The number of other weapon regulations that a department performs is significantly related to the probability that they register handguns. This variable is also significantly related to the probability of the registration of long guns. In both regressions, each additional weapon regulation that a department does increases the probability of voluntary registration of handguns or long guns (the two different dependent variables) by 3 percentage points. Municipal police departments are not more likely, on the average, to perform either of these registration functions than are sheriffs and county police. There is also no

Table 3-9

Regression of Gun Registration by Local
Departments in Areas with No Required Gun Registration

Independent Variables	Dependent Variable is:			
	Register Handgun 1 = yes 0 = no		Register Long Gun 1 = yes 0 = no	
	<u>b</u>	<u>SE</u>	<u>b</u>	<u>SE</u>
Number of other Weapon Regulations Done by Police	.03 **	.01	.03 ***	.01
Municipal Police Department ^a	.12	.08	.07	.05
<u>Region</u> ^b				
West	.32 ***	.08	.21 ***	.06
Northeast	-.03	.10	-.18 **	.06
North Central	.08	.09	-.20 ***	.06
<u>Size of Department</u> ^c				
40 to 89 officers	.13	.13	.04	.08
90 to 499 officers	.16	.11	.01	.07
500 or more officers	.11	.11	.04	.07
CONSTANT	-.05	.12	.08	.08
R ² =		.18		.19
N ^d =		203		335

^aOmitted category is "Sheriff and County Police".

^bU.S. Census Bureau Definition. Omitted category is "South".

^cNumber of officers from LEAA data file. Omitted category is "1 to 39 officers".

^dEach regression includes only those departments in areas where handgun or long gun regulation is not required by law.

* indicates statistical significance at .05

** indicates statistical significance at .01

*** indicates statistical significance at .001

significant difference by size of department in either regression.

Local law enforcement agencies in the West are more likely to register both handguns and long guns than are those departments in the South.

On the average, regardless of other variables in the equation, long gun registration is lower among departments in the Northeast and the North Central regions than in the South.

Again, this analysis of the voluntary registration of handguns and long guns performed by certain local police departments does not mean that all such weapons are being registered in these jurisdictions. These local departments are probably willing to register any weapons for citizens who make such a request. The coverage of the weapon registration may be lower in these areas than in areas where the police or some other agency are required by law to register all weapons. Our survey does not provide an answer to this question.

Stolen Weapon Regulations

Another area of weapon regulation is the requirement in many areas of the country that the loss or theft of a gun be reported to the police or other authorities. A successful weapon tracing system requires that such reports be made.

Table 3-10 shows the percentages of local police departments that are in jurisdictions with such laws about the theft or loss of a weapon. Slightly less than half of the departments are in areas where retailers must report lost or stolen guns. This percentage is lower for the requirement of citizens reports; 31% of the departments state that citizens must report the theft or loss of a gun. Note also that there

Table 3-10
Percent of Departments in Areas with Legal
Requirement to Report Lost/Stolen Guns by Region

	<u>Total</u>	<u>West</u>	<u>North East</u>	<u>North Central</u>	<u>South</u>
<u>Retailers Have to Report Lost/Stolen Guns</u>					
Yes, All Firearms	46.4%	21.4%	68.3%	52.7%	37.4%
Yes, Handguns Only	1.9	1.6	3.3	1.8	0.9
No	36.9	59.9	11.9	34.3	47.2
Unsure	14.8	17.1	16.4	11.2	14.5
N =	(426)	(85)	(118)	(101)	(123)
<u>Citizens Have to Report Lost/Stolen Guns</u>					
Yes, All Firearms	28.9%	12.1%	56.2%	24.3%	18.5%
Yes, Handguns Only	2.1	0	5.3	2.2	0.3
No	62.3	85.8	26.9	71.0	72.3
Unsure	6.7	2.1	11.6	2.5	8.9
N =	(427)	(90)	(118)	(101)	(118)

are some departments that are unsure about the requirement for retailers (14.8%) or citizens (6.7%) to report lost or stolen weapons to the authorities. The percentages of departments that were unsure about the weapons regulations presented in the earlier analysis in Table 3-1 were much smaller by comparison.

As seen with the other weapon regulations, there is considerable variation across regions in the requirement to report stolen or lost guns. By far, departments in the Northeast are the most likely to be in an area where this is a requirement than are departments in other regions. Over half of the Northeast departments report this law in their areas for both retailers and private citizens; only 21.4% of the departments in the West have a law in their jurisdiction for retailers and only 12.1% of the Western departments are in areas where private citizens are required to report stolen weapons.

Ease of Handgun Purchase

We asked the respondents in the local departments to rate the ease or difficulty of purchasing a handgun in their areas - either legally or illegally (see Table 3-11). Most respondents rate both legal and illegal purchases as average; but one-quarter of the respondents state that it is extremely easy to purchase a handgun in their area (this is shown for both the legal and illegal purchases). A smaller percentage report that such purchases are extremely difficult. On the average, the ease of purchasing a handgun legally or illegally is about the same, with mean ratings of 4.5 and 4.6, respectively.

Table 3-11
Ease of Handgun Purchase in Local Police Jurisdictions

A: <u>How Easy is to purchase a handgun</u>		Legally?	Illegally?
Extremely difficult	(1)	11.2%	6.7%
	(2)	2.5	2.9
	(3)	7.2	8.9
About average	(4)	41.6	33.5
	(5)	4.1	7.5
	(6)	3.2	5.1
Extremely easy	(7)	28.4	24.3
Unsure		1.8	11.1
N =		(445)	(438)
Average Rating of ease of handgun purchase ^a		4.5	4.6

B: Average ease of Handgun purchase by Region

Region	Legally		Illegally	
	Mean	N	Mean	N
West	5.0	(90)	4.7	(81)
Northeast	3.5	(113)	3.8	(87)
North Central	3.8	(106)	4.1	(102)
South	5.6	(127)	5.6	(120)

^aMean ease of purchase calculated on a scale of 1 to 7, excluding "Unsure".

The average ease of a handgun purchase is higher in the South, according to the respondents in local police departments. It is more difficult to purchase a handgun in the Northeast and the North Central regions. This regional difference holds for both legal and illegal purchases of handguns.

Have weapon regulations, particularly regulation of handguns, affected the ease of handgun purchase as judged by the local police? A regression of the ease of the legal and illegal purchase of a handgun on handgun regulations and departmental characteristics is shown in Table 3-12. The variable of handgun regulation is a binary variable where the value of 1 represents those local departments that have any of the three types of handgun regulations required in their jurisdiction and 0 is no handgun regulation required by law. The coefficient for this variable in the regression for ease of legally purchasing a handgun is negative; in those areas where there is handgun regulation, the police respondents judge the legal purchase of a handgun to be more difficult than in those areas without handgun regulation. This effect is independent of the local department characteristics. The effect of handgun regulation on the ease of an illegal purchase is judged to be zero; on the average, the ease of purchasing a handgun illegally is judged by the police respondents to be the same in areas with handgun regulation as in areas with no such regulation.

This difference in the effect of handgun regulation is not surprising. One can assume that regulations increase the difficulty of legal purchases of guns with additional forms and permits to be filed and waiting periods involved. Note that this regression analysis does

Table 3-12
Regressions of Ease of Handgun Purchases on
Handgun Regulation and Department Characteristics

Independent Variables	Dependent Variable Is: ^a			
	Ease of Illegal Handgun Purchase		Ease of Legal Handgun Purchase	
	<u>b</u>	<u>SE</u>	<u>b</u>	<u>SE</u>
Handgun Regulation 1 = yes · 0 = no	-.08	.21	-.80 ***	.21
Municipal Police ^b	-.10	.20	-.22	.20
<u>Region^c</u>				
West	-.98 ***	.24	-.60 *	.25
Northeast	-1.57 ***	.25	-1.84 ***	.26
North Central	-1.45 ***	.24	-1.62 ***	.25
<u>Size of Department^d</u>				
40 to 89 officers	.09	.34	-.32	.35
90 to 499 officers	.54	.28	-.01	.29
500 or more officers	.76 ***	.30	-.27	.27
CONSTANT	5.21 ***	.33	6.43 ***	.34
R ² =		.20		.26
N =		368		386

^aEase of purchase on a scale from 1 = very difficult to 7 = very easy.

^bOmitted category is "Sheriff and County Police".

^cU.S. Bureau of Census Definition. Omitted category is "South".

^dNumber of officers from LEAA data file. Omitted category is "1 to 39".

* indicates statistical significance at .05

*** indicates statistical significance at .001

not show that handgun regulation has necessarily decreased the numbers of handguns purchased legally or illegally; instead, it shows that the police respondents in our survey from areas where there is some handgun regulation judge that the legal purchase of handguns is more difficult than do respondents from areas with no local handgun regulation.

There is no difference in the rating of the ease of handgun purchase of respondents from different types of department or different sizes of departments. The one exception is that police in the largest departments give a slightly higher (easier) rating to the purchase of a handgun illegally.

Independent of the effect of handgun regulation, police from all regions except the South judge that it is more difficult to purchase a handgun in their jurisdictions than do the police from departments in the South. These region effects are found in both the legal and illegal purchase of a handgun regressions. The police from the departments in the Northeast see the most difficulty with handgun purchases, both legally and illegally. This region effect is net of handgun regulation and size of department.

Weapon Regulation and the Crime Problem

The relationship between the regulation of weapons and the perceptions of the local police respondents of the weapons and crime problem in their jurisdiction is presented in the regression in Table 3-13. The dependent variable is the average seriousness rating given to the weapons and crime problem and the illegal firearms traffic problem. The regression coefficient for the number of weapon regulations required

Table 3-13

Regression of Average Firearms Crime Problem^a
on Department Characteristics and Weapon Regulation

<u>Independent Variables</u>	Dependent Variable is Average Crime Problem Rating	
	<u>b</u>	<u>SE</u>
Number of weapon regulations ^b required by law in jurisdiction	.05 ***	.01
Municipal police department ^c	.27 ***	.07
<u>Region^d</u>		
West	.05	.09
Northeast	-.47 ***	.09
North Central	-.10 ***	.03
<u>Size of Department^e</u>		
40 to 89 officers	.23 *	.12
90 to 499 officers	.63 ***	.10
500 or more officers	1.02 ***	.09
CONSTANT		
R ² =	.39	
N =	440	

^aAverage rating given to two weapons and crime problems, see Table 3-1 and 3-2.

^bSee Table 3-4 for weapon regulations.

^cOmitted category is "Sheriff and County Police".

^dU.S. Census Bureau definition. Omitted category is "South".

^eNumber of sworn officers from LEAA data file. Omitted category is "1 to 39 officers".

* indicates statistical significance at .05
*** indicates statistical significance at .001

by law in the local department's jurisdiction is positive, .05. For every weapon regulation that is required in the jurisdiction, the perceived seriousness of the weapons and crime problem increases by .05. The other variables in this regression which describe the local department's characteristic are related to the perceived crime seriousness rating as before (see above Table 3-3). Police respondents from municipal police departments, from large police departments and from the South tend to rate the weapons and crime problem as more serious.

Controversy and Weapon Regulations

The level of controversy about gun regulations is another indicator of the attitudes of the community in which the local police are located. The amount of controversy within the state and particularly the local community may affect the department's procedures and policies about weapons. Respondents in the local law enforcement departments report a higher level of controversy over all types of weapon regulations at the state level than at the local level (see Table 3-14). At the state level, the most controversial weapons issue is the proposal for mandatory sentences for crimes committed with guns; 83.7% of the respondents report that this issue is controversial in their state. The two issues concerning handguns, proposals for closer regulation of handgun sales and of handgun possession, are also reported as controversial at the state level by over half of the respondents. The controversy over long gun regulation issues is much lower, although nearly a third of the respondents report some controversy on these two long gun issues at the state level.

Table 3-14

State and Local Level Controversy over Weapon Regulation

	Has There Been Controversy at:					
	State Level			Local Level		
	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>N</u>
Proposals for Closer Regulation of Handgun Sales	65.1%	34.9	(439)	38.3%	61.7	(419)
Proposals for Closer Regulation of Long Gun Sales	32.4%	67.6	(432)	17.1%	82.9	(413)
Proposals for Mandatory Sentences for Crimes Committed with Guns	83.7%	16.3	(437)	49.1%	50.9	(414)
Proposals for Closer Regulation of Handgun Possession	65.8%	34.2	(437)	39.0%	61.0	(412)
Proposals for Closer Regulation of Long Gun Possession	29.3%	70.7	(432)	19.2%	80.8	(413)

Table 3-15 shows the percentages of local law enforcement departments that are in areas with recent controversy over proposed weapon regulations. As seen in the previous discussion, the level of controversy is higher at the state level than at the local level for all regions and all regulations.

The departments in the Northeast generally report the highest level of controversy at the state level over handgun and long gun weapon regulations. Particularly in the area of proposed handgun regulations, over 80% of the local departments from the Northeast report controversy at the state level. There is also a high percentage of departments in the West that report state level controversy over mandatory sentence proposals. The departments from the South report the lowest levels of state controversy; although, in the area of handgun regulation, half report controversy and in the area of mandatory sentences, 72.6% of the Southern departments report controversy within their state.

The amount of controversy at the local level is fairly low for all regions (in comparison to the state level controversy). Less than half of the local departments report any controversy over mandatory sentences and handgun regulations and less than a quarter report local level controversy over proposed long gun regulations. The regional variation in the amount of local level controversy is similar to that seen at the state level.

The regional variation found in the reported recent controversy over proposed weapon regulations is probably related to the earlier analysis of the regional variation in the amount and types of weapon regulations by region.

Table 3-15

Percent of Departments in Areas with Weapon Regulation Controversy by Region

	Percent with Controversy at: ^a							
	State Level				Local Level			
	West	NE	NC	South	West	NE	NC	South
Proposals for Closer Regulation of Handgun Sales	63.9% (90)	80.9% (118)	63.0% (104)	53.1% (126)	44.9% (87)	36.4% (108)	35.0% (99)	37.9% (124)
Proposals for Closer Regulation of Long Gun Sales	31.3% (86)	42.0% (116)	35.2% (104)	21.8% (126)	26.1% (84)	13.3% (106)	18.4% (99)	13.2% (124)
Proposals for Mandatory Sentences for Crimes Committed with Guns	98.3% (90)	88.7% (133)	79.4% (106)	72.6% (126)	61.8% (87)	43.0% (104)	44.1% (99)	49.1% (124)
Proposals for Closer Regulation of Handgun Possession	66.6% (90)	85.2% (117)	62.4% (104)	50.1% (126)	48.1% (87)	41.3% (107)	39.4% (98)	29.9% (120)
Proposals for Closer Regulation of Long Gun Possession	31.3% (86)	42.8% (116)	28.4% (105)	15.9% (126)	25.3% (83)	23.4% (107)	19.9% (99)	10.7% (124)

^a"Has there been controversy in the last several years in your area over ..."

One of the main areas of weapon policy in local police departments deals with the procedures to be followed when a weapon is recovered, found, confiscated or reported stolen. What actions do the local police typically take when a weapon is recovered? What are the policies when the police confiscate a weapon upon arrest of an armed suspect? What are the departmental procedures for storage and disposition of weapons in the department's possession? Do these procedures vary if the weapon is evidence or has been illegally possessed?

The first section of this chapter covers the use of the NCIC and ATF weapons tracing systems as used by local law enforcement agencies. The second section deals with the storage and disposition of weapons and local policies and procedures as reported by the departments.

Departmental Use of NCIC and ATF Trace Service

Police departments can utilize two national sources of information in the investigation of firearms-related incidents: The National Crime Information Center (NCIC) and the Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF) firearms trace service. In addition to these national sources of information, departments may also utilize 1) local or state firearms tracing units and/or 2) information files on dealer sales, purchase permits, and firearm registration. Although departmental use of and experience with the NCIC and ATF trace services has been studied for selected cities (e.g., the ten major cities studied by Brill, 1977), there has been no national assessment of usage and evaluation of these information sources. Our questionnaire results provide the first such data on the extent to

CHAPTER 4

WEAPONS POLICIES IN LOCAL DEPARTMENTS

USE OF NCIC AND ATF AND STORAGE AND DISPOSAL OF FIREARMS

which such services are used by police departments and the utility of such sources in responding to firearms-related incidents.¹ Before discussing the results from the survey, we shall first describe briefly what the NCIC system and ATF trace service are and their relationship to each other.

NCIC²

The NCIC of the FBI was begun in January 1967 as a national computerized data base for reporting of and making inquiries about stolen items (e.g., motor vehicles, firearms, boats, license plates, stock and bonds, etc.), as well as retaining information on wanted persons and missing persons. States and municipalities joined the system by purchasing or renting computer terminals, as well as other software to hook into and use the system. Participation in the NCIC is voluntary for all law enforcement agencies.

¹One possible exception is the "Gun Tracing Systems Study Report" (1976) prepared by the Search Group, Inc., for the LEAA. This report provides very sketchy information on the use of the ATF service for 29 U.S. cities. The cities studied are not the largest U.S. cities, nor are they "representative" in any sense; there is no discussion of the basis for the selection of the city sample in the report, and it appears to be one of convenience, heavily concentrating on cities in Florida (N=6), Maryland (N=6), Georgia (N=4) and Nebraska and Iowa (N=6). Cities of San Francisco, Los Angeles, Detroit, New York, New Orleans and Philadelphia, and the New Jersey State Police round out the sample. The report does provide 1) the number of times ATF traces were initiated in some of the cities for 1975 and 2) computer printouts produced by ATF on the types of firearms traced and the reasons that ATF could not complete traces; we shall draw upon this information in describing the ATF trace service later in this chapter.

²Information about the NCIC was obtained from a telephone interview with Mr. Conner of the F.B.I. in June 1979.

NCIC officials believe that virtually all law enforcement agencies have terminals on their premises or access to terminals, which are used to 1) enter information on thefts and to make inquiries for determining whether items have been reported stolen and 2) enter and retrieve information on persons wanted for arrest or reported missing. For very small law enforcement agencies, access to the NCIC is often made via a nearby sheriff or state police department.

Entries to the NCIC system are made only in the case that a person has reported a theft to the police (or a warrant is out for the arrest of an individual), and the police have carried out the usual documentation of such incidents. In order to report the theft of a firearm, information on the firearm make, serial number and the caliber of the weapon must be entered. The NCIC system's response is usually immediate depending on user loads at any given time.

There are currently no statistics gathered on the volume of annual use by police departments of the NCIC system. However an NCIC official notes that there are 7.3 million records on the system, about 1.3 million of which are records associated with the stolen or confiscated firearms. There are approximately 279,000 daily "transactions" made with the NCIC files (either reports or inquiries regarding stolen items and warrants, or modifications to the file, e.g., removing a stolen item from the file after it has been recovered). It is estimated that there are about 1000 "hits" per day through the use of the system, i.e., something has been gained or learned through the use of the system.

The NCIC is prepared to receive and record reports of firearms recovered by police who want to determine whether the firearm they

confiscated has been reported as stolen or involved in a crime elsewhere.

In theory, all law enforcement agencies are supposed to report thefts of firearms to the NCIC. However, in many areas, manufacturers, retailers or wholesalers are not legally required to report thefts of firearms. In addition, citizens are not legally obliged to report firearms theft to the police in many areas. Thus, the local police are often not informed of firearms theft in many cases; and even if they are informed, they may not or cannot send this information to the NCIC.

Two lines of suggestive evidence on stolen firearms bear mentioning at this point. First, Brill's (1977) analysis of the proportion of confiscated weapons in a study of New York City department practices reveals that of the confiscated firearms which were determined to be stolen, about half were stolen from manufacturers, distributors, dealers, or in transit; in contrast, ATF officials believe that most firearms are stolen from individual owners (Ibid.: 109). Second, Brill's analysis of some cities in addition to information obtained from the concentrated study of a sample of 300 firearms confiscated during Project Identification (Project 300), reveals that of the total firearms confiscated by the police, about 20 to 25% were determined to be stolen. From the Project 300 data, one finds that of the firearms stolen (N=66), 14 (or 20%) had been reported to the police. In turn, none of these 14 firearms had been reported by the police to NCIC. Clearly, the numbers here are very low to feel confident in making generalizations. However, this information shows that there is sizeable "leakage" in the reporting of stolen weapons, both to the police and to the NCIC, which makes the NCIC files incomplete in their records of all firearms stolen.

Some corollary problems with the NCIC are that even though guns manufactured after 1958 (with the exception of .22 caliber rifles and shotguns) were required to have serial numbers on them, there is no standardization of serial numbers (such standardization could have been implemented with the Gun Control Act of 1968, but ATF officials say they do not want to burden manufacturers with the retooling that such a requirement would necessitate). Manufacturers may number their firearms in any way they wish, with a variety of letter and number combinations. The result is that information may be recorded incorrectly when sent to the NCIC because police officers misread serial numbers, or because two firearms from different manufacturers have the same or nearly the same number (Ibid.: 126).

ATF Weapon Trace Service³

The ATF centralized tracing service began in October, 1972. During 1979, an ATF official estimated that the ATF received approximately 6000 trace requests monthly, or about 72,000 requests annually. This represents a tremendous increase from trace requests initiated in 1975 (about 35,000) and 1972 (about 3500). Trace requests are often made to ATF in instances where the transfer history of a firearm may help to locate a suspect or provide critical evidence to press charges in a firearms-related crime.

Law enforcement agencies usually initiate requests by contacting their local ATF office. Some 130 local ATF offices exist nationally, and

³Information about the ATF was obtained from a telephone interview in June 1979 with Mr. Ralph Anthony, Chief of the Tracing Division at the ATF. In addition, information from the Search Group, Inc. (1976) report is incorporated into the discussion.

every state (with two exceptions) has at least one such office. A police department's trace request includes a description of the firearms, how it came to be confiscated, its theft status, and background information on the owner of the firearm (if available). The local ATF office submits this information on a form to ATF's central Washington office. Trace requests are made by telephone or telex which are equipped to receive trace requests 24 hours a day. When the trace is received in the ATF's central office, tracers are supposed to complete the trace in the designated time period depending on the priority assigned by the initiating agency:

- 1) Urgent -- Firearms used in crime of violence or felony and information essential to apprehend or hold a suspect. 24 hours
- 2) Expedite - Time factor is essential to investigation. 4 days
- 3) Routine -- Time factor is not essential to case. 7 days

In responding to trace requests, the ATF workers do not have access to any computerized records since all manufacturers', distributors' and dealers' records are kept on their premises only. Instead, the ATF tracer uses the telephone in making inquiries to the manufacturer, first retail outlet, and to the first purchaser of the firearm. Requests to the same manufacturer are accumulated and calls are made to a designated contact at the manufacturer at pre-arranged times during the day. Records for an estimated annual number of 20,000 firearms retailers who go out of business are centrally located in an ATF Virginia office; and tracers may also need these paper files.

In 1975, the success rate for ATF traces was 62% for guns manufactured in the United States and 51% for those manufactured in other countries.

Domestic traces account for about three-quarters of all trace requests. An ATF official noted that traces of firearms manufactured after 1968 have a higher success rate (90%). This higher rate is due to two features of the Gun Control Act of 1968: 1) manufacturers were required to have serial numbers on shotguns and .22 caliber rifles and 2) manufacturers and dealers were required to keep records of firearms transactions.

From ATF's point of view, the problems they encounter in completing traces successfully are 1) poor information from departments on firearms identification, which ATF tracers either attempt to decipher or must send the trace back to the initiating department for more information and 2) difficulty in getting information from manufacturers and dealers for the trace.

There has been discussion within ATF to publish a handbook for police departments to aid in the accuracy of firearm identification, but this has not yet been done. The primary reason, expressed from an ATF official in 1979 and in Brill's interviews with ATF officials in 1975 is that ATF does not want to advertise its services to law enforcement agencies for fear they will be inundated with too many requests (ATF has neither the resources nor the number of personnel needed to respond to an increased trace request load, given a non-computerized data base).

Not surprisingly, the involvement of particular police departments in a number of ATF studies on confiscated firearms (e.g., Project Identification and Concentrated Urban Enforcement) subsequently led to their more active use of ATF tracing services upon completion of these studies. Similarly, an LEAA-sponsored gun identification training program for law enforcement officers had the same effect of increasing gun trace requests

in those departments in which participating officers were employed. Another aspect of whether police departments will initiate trace requests is the extent to which local and state weapons files provide them with necessary and helpful information. Brill's (1977) interviews with police officials revealed that the major reason the police do not request traces more often from ATF is the time it takes to trace a firearm. However, Brill notes that "at present, ATF does not know which police departments make extensive use of its tracing program, why they use it, or how well it works" (*Ibid.*: 125). In the Search Report, however, ATF estimates that about 2700 out of 14,000 law enforcement agencies use the trace service (about 20% of the agencies).

In addition to the speed at which a trace can be accomplished, ATF also has a problem in getting complete information from manufacturers and dealers on firearms transactions. Of the domestic traces that failed in 1975 (approximately 10,000), 11% were from factory records that were "unavailable" and 19% because dealers records were "unavailable" (*Ibid.*: 117). By law these manufacturer and dealer records should be available; thus, the 30% of unsuccessful domestic traces in 1975 resulted from non-compliance of manufacturers and dealers licensees with federal law. However, because ATF has not promulgated regulations requiring dealers and manufacturers to report firearms dispositions regularly to ATF (records which ATF could theoretically computerize), the required information to make a trace is not available or easily accessible. This problem is further underscored by the fact that the nation's two largest manufacturers of handguns had high unsuccessful trace rates in 1975 (35% and 45%). Rather than requiring manufacturers and dealers to regularly report

firearm dispositions, ATF expects that these licensees will "voluntarily cooperate" by submitting firearm dispositions to them.

From the police department's viewpoint, some suggestive if sketchy information is provided on the use of the ATF by the Search Group, Inc. report. Although ATF is the only agency authorized to access manufacturers, wholesalers and retailers records, some departments reported that they often request information from the manufacturer directly in obtaining firearms information to obtain the information more quickly. In some states, e.g., California, the ATF trace service is not initially used; instead an automated weapons file on guns registered in the state is used. Such weapons information files also exist for New York, New Jersey, Iowa and Maryland and in Philadelphia and Miami (many more states and local jurisdictions have weapons files than these mentioned; our questionnaire results show that over 80% of the local departments in our survey may send stolen firearms information to local, state or regional weapons files).

There appears to be very little relationship between the size of the police department's jurisdiction and the number of traces initiated to ATF. For example, in 1975, the New York City police department reported that 15 trace requests were made at ATF and in Detroit, 7 ATF trace requests were made. In contrast, for a very small police department in Forest Park, Georgia (with a population of 23,500), some 12 trace requests were made and in Augusta, Georgia, the report shows that 500-600 trace requests were made to ATF (Search Report, 1976: 21-27).

Relationship of ATF to NCIC

The NCIC and ATF trace services are two distinct services which law enforcement agencies can utilize in the identification and last known whereabouts or ownership of firearms they confiscate. An ATF official said that ATF never uses the NCIC files, and an NCIC official said "what ATF does is entirely separate from what we do". The consequences of this separation of the two information sources is most problematic in the identification of stolen firearms. For example, if an ATF trace revealed that a firearm was stolen from a retailer, the ATF tracer would not enter this information onto the NCIC files, but instead would forward it back to the law enforcement agency initiating the request. It is uncertain what ATF does with the information it receives from manufacturers and dealers (admittedly on an ad hoc basis) who may report stolen firearms to them.

This review of the background and differences in the ATF trace service and the NCIC reveals that little is known on a national level of the usage and utility of each information source in dealing with firearms-related incidents and crimes. We shall turn to the survey results to determine how local police departments describe and rate their experiences with ATF and NCIC.

Use of NCIC and ATF

Our survey results show that almost all local police departments have access to the NCIC with a terminal in their own department (86%) or a terminal in a nearby law enforcement agency (13%). Over 90% of the police

departments have a staff member who is familiar with the use of the computer terminal and the NCIC system. (See Table 4-1)

We asked whether the NCIC and ATF would be used in two types of police situations: 1) firearms implicated in a crime and 2) firearms found or recovered. Over 90% of the local departments report that they would check every firearm in both of these situations with the NCIC. Only one-fifth of the departments would utilize the ATF. (Panel B of Table 4-1) The ATF trace service would most commonly be used for "only some firearms" implicated in a crime or recovered. Of note is the fact that about one-quarter of the nation's police force would never check on these firearms using the ATF trace service. This proportion then provides that first estimate of the extent to which ATF is either unknown or is never used by the local police. We shall examine the regional and size of department variation in response to this question later in this chapter.

Evaluation of ATF and NCIC

Our survey asked five evaluation questions on the use of both NCIC and ATF: four specific types of problems that local departments might encounter using either information source and one general overall rating question. A description of the responses is shown in Table 4-2.

Of the four types of specific problems, "frequent delays in response" was rated as the most serious, for both ATF and NCIC. About one-fifth of the local departments report that delays were either very serious or somewhat serious with both systems. The distribution of responses of time delays was almost identical for ATF and NCIC, a result that is somewhat surprising, given that NCIC is a computerized retrieval system and ATF is

CONTINUED

1 OF 3

Table 4-1

Use of NCIC and ATF by Local Departments

A: Departments with direct access to NCIC

	Percent
Yes	86%
No	14
N =	(448)

IF NO: Departments with access to NCIC through another agency

	Percent
Yes	97%
No	3
N =	(62)

Departments with staff familiar with NCIC system use

	Percent
Yes	92%
No	7
Unsure	1
N =	(443)

Table 4-1 (continued)

B: Use of NCIC and ATF for firearms implicated in a crime

	<u>NCIC</u>	<u>ATF</u>
Every firearm is checked	91%	19%
Most firearms are checked	7	7
Only some firearms are checked	1	37
Firearms are very seldom checked	0	12
Firearms are never checked	1	25
N =	(443)	(370)

C: Use of NCIC and ATF for found, confiscated or recovered firearm

	<u>NCIC</u>	<u>ATF</u>
Every firearm is checked	90%	18%
Most firearms are checked	9	7
Only some firearms are checked	0	33
Firearms are very seldom checked	0	16
Firearms are never checked	1	26
N =	(442)	(381)

not. It is possible, however, that two different time frames are used in judging "delay" for NCIC and ATF, the former expected to be a quicker information source than the latter.

The least problematic aspect of both information sources was cost to the department of using them: only 6% of the local departments find this a serious or somewhat serious problem. Of interest here is that about three-fourths of the departments say that costs to the department were not a problem at all in using the ATF trace service. One would have expected an even higher proportion since the ATF service is free, unless departments were considering other than strictly economic "costs". As one might expect, costs were more of a problem to the departments in using the NCIC, since the NCIC can involve costs for computer time, terminal rental, training someone to use the system, etc.

The accuracy of information obtained and the helpfulness of the information in solving crimes were both rated highly for the ATF trace service and NCIC. Although two-thirds of the local departments reply that these were not problems at all in using the NCIC or ATF, about 8% to 12% did register negative response to these items.

Given that local departments respond favorably and similarly to the NCIC and ATF for each of the four specific problem areas identified on the survey, the response to the overall evaluation question is surprisingly more varied. Some 2% of the local departments rate the departmental experience with NCIC as seldom useful or useless, while 31% say that their experience with the ATF trace service is seldom useful or useless. Thus there is a more negative orientation to the ATF than our four specific problem areas uncovered.

Table 4-2

Evaluation of NCIC and ATF by Local Departments

Frequent Delays in Response

	<u>NCIC</u> ^a	<u>ATF</u> ^b
Very serious problem	5%	3%
Somewhat serious	13	21
Not too serious	44	41
Not serious at all	38	35
N =	(430)	(274)

Information Obtained is not Accurate

	<u>NCIC</u>	<u>ATF</u>
Very serious problem	3%	4%
Somewhat serious	5	8
Not too serious	27	16
Not serious at all	65	72
N =	(449)	(272)

Costs to the Department of Using the System are High

	<u>NCIC</u>	<u>ATF</u>
Very serious problem	1%	1%
Somewhat serious	7	4
Not too serious	33	22
Not serious at all	59	73
N =	(427)	(272)

Information not Helpful in Solving the Crime

	<u>NCIC</u>	<u>ATF</u>
Very serious problem	1%	2%
Somewhat serious	6	7
Not too serious	22	16
Not serious at all	71	75
N =	(427)	(274)

(continued)

^aRatings provided by departments that use NCIC.
^bRatings provided by departments that use ATF.

Table 4-2 (continued)

<u>Overall Department Experience</u>	<u>NCIC</u>	<u>ATF</u>
Usually useful	78%	39%
Often useful	20	30
Seldom useful	2	29
Useless	0	2
N =	(438)	(330)

Regional and Size Variation in Response to NCIC and ATF

As we discussed earlier, there is a relationship between region and size of local police departments: departments in the West and the South have a higher representation of large sized departments (90 or more sworn officers) than those in the North Central states, and especially those in the Northeast (see Table 2-6 above). This relationship has some effect on our examination of the regional and department size variation in response to the use of NCIC and ATF.

As our analysis of computer usage in local police departments reveals (see Chapter 6), departments in the Northeast region and smaller departments (less than 40 officers) are less likely to have direct access to the NCIC (about 70% of the Northeast departments as compared to 90% to 95% for the departments from other regions; and about half of the local departments having less than 40 officers, compared to 90% to 94% of the local departments with more than 40 officers). This distribution of access to NCIC by region and size of department is shown in Panel A of Table 4-3. Similarly departments in the Northeast and smaller departments are less likely to have a staff member who is familiar with the use of a computer terminal.

Panel B and Panel C show the use of NCIC and ATF for the two types of police situations by region and size of department. In response to the two types of situations in which firearms might be checked with the NCIC or traced by ATF, the responses are about the same. In both situations, departments located in the South, very small departments (1 to 9 officers) and very large departments (500 or more officers) are less likely than

Table 4-3

Use of NCIC and ATF by Local Departments
by Region and Size of DepartmentA: Departments with direct access to NCIC

	Region				Size of Department				
	West	NE	NC	South	1-9	10-39	40-89	90-499	500 +
Yes	89%	71%	90%	95%	33%	53%	89%	94%	93%
N =	(91)	(121)	(105)	(131)	(13)	(54)	(45)	(110)	(226)

Departments with staff member familiar with NCIC system

	Region				Size of Department				
	West	NE	NC	South	1-9	10-39	40-89	90-499	500 +
Yes	100%	77%	96%	99%	56%	69%	91%	97%	98%
N =	(91)	(117)	(105)	(131)	(13)	(54)	(45)	(109)	(222)

B: Use of NCIC and ATF for firearms implicated in crime

NCIC	Region				Size of Department				
	West	NE	NC	South	1-9	10-39	40-89	90-499	500 +
Every firearm	92%	92%	94%	86%	100%	90%	96%	88%	91%
Most firearms	7	4	3	14	0	8	2	11	7
Some firearms	1	0	3	0	0	2	2	1	0
Seldom checked	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Never checked	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
N =	(91)	(116)	(106)	(131)	(12)	(54)	(46)	(110)	(222)

ATF

Every firearm	22%	27%	18%	12%	0%	23%	24%	19%	19%
Most firearms	7	10	8	5	14	8	11	12	4
Some firearms	39	33	44	35	43	36	32	39	38
Seldom checked	17	4	13	13	0	15	13	13	10
Never checked	16	26	16	34	43	18	21	17	29
N =	(70)	(98)	(86)	(116)	(10)	(41)	(37)	(94)	(187)

(continued)

Table 4-3 (continued)

C: Use of NCIC and ATF for found, confiscated or recovered firearms

NCIC	Region				Size of Department					
	West	NE	NC	South	1-9	10-39	40-89	90-499	500 +	
Every firearm	88%	91%	97%	84%	100%	90%	94%	90%	88%	
Most firearms	12	6	1	16	0	8	6	9	10	
Some firearms	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	
Seldom checked	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	
Never checked	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	
N =	(90)	(115)	(106)	(131)	(12)	(54)	(46)	(108)	(222)	
<u>ATF</u>										
Every firearm	13%	29%	17%	12%	0%	24%	23%	18%	16%	
Most firearms	12	9	6	6	17	7	13	13	4	
Some firearms	30	28	37	36	33	32	26	35	34	
Seldom checked	29	7	23	9	0	17	18	15	16	
Never checked	16	27	17	37	50	20	20	19	30	
N =	(74)	(110)	(90)	(118)	(9)	(43)	(38)	(96)	(195)	

Region is U.S. Census Bureau definition.

Size of department is number of sworn officers from LEAA data file.

others to utilize the ATF trace service. Although 37% of the local departments in the Northeast say that the ATF trace service would be used, the corresponding proportions in the West are 29%, in the North Central region 26%, and in the South 17%. While relatively higher proportions of local departments in the Northeast do utilize ATF, high proportions also never use the trace service: about one-quarter of the Northeast departments never check firearms with ATF, while 16% of the local departments in the West and in the North Central states never check; in the South, over one-third of the local departments never use the ATF trace service to check firearms.

The distribution of responses of use of ATF for tracing firearms involved in a crime is very similar for all department sizes (see Panel B of Table 4-3). About a third of the departments in each size category say that they would usually check with ATF to trace these firearms ("every gun" and "most guns" categories combined).

The pattern of usage of the ATF trace service for firearms found, confiscated or recovered (see Panel C of Table 4-3) is very similar to that for firearms involved in a crime. The same regional and department size variation noted for the first type of confiscated firearms situation is found here.

As noted earlier, local departments in the South, in particular, and in the Northeast to some extent, tend to use ATF less often than do departments in the West and North Central states. In examining the responses to the evaluation questions on the usefulness or difficulty in using the ATF trace service, the departments who do not use the ATF trace are omitted from the results.

Table 4-4

Overall Department Experience with NCIC and ATF
by Region and Size of Department

NCIC	Region ^a				Size of Department ^b				
	West	NE	NC	South	1-9	10-39	40-89	90-499	500 +
Usually useful	71%	89%	80%	71%	75%	88%	87%	81%	71%
Often useful	29	10	18	25	25	10	11	17	27
Seldom useful	0	1	2	4	0	2	2	2	2
Useless	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
N =	(90)	(112)	(106)	(131)	(12)	(54)	(46)	(108)	(218)
<u>ATF</u>									
Usually useful	37%	54%	41%	21%	0%	53%	46%	38%	34%
Often useful	26	27	25	40	25	14	27	35	32
Seldom useful	31	18	32	34	75	31	27	24	29
Useless	1	1	2	5	0	2	0	2	3
Don't know	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2
N =	(76)	(86)	(84)	(83)	(6)	(45)	(33)	(86)	(160)

^aU.S. Census Bureau region definition.

^bNumber of sworn officers from LEAA data file.

The overall usefulness of the ATF trace service is most positively evaluated by local departments in the Northeast (over half say the ATF was usually useful) and least favorably by departments in the South (about one-fifth say that ATF was usually useful). This distribution of the evaluation of NCIC and ATF is shown in Table 4-4. Most positive experiences with the ATF are registered by small and medium sized departments (10 to 89 officers); about half say that the ATF trace service is usually useful. Only a third of the larger departments say that ATF is usually useful.

Tables 4-5 and 4-6 present the evaluation of the four specific problem areas of NCIC and ATF by region and department size. These tables show that frequent delays in response and inaccuracy of information obtained pose the most problems for local departments. Departments in the West and in the South and the largest departments respond relatively more negatively to these two items. In addition, the departments in the South register the most negative responses to the helpfulness of the ATF information in solving crimes (17% feel that the ATF trace service was not helpful in solving crimes compared to 4% to 8% of the local departments in the other regions). Of special note here is that the potentially heaviest users of the ATF (largest police departments) find more criticism with the ATF than do the smaller departments for delays in response, accuracy of information, and helpfulness of the information in solving crimes.

For regional variation in the use of the NCIC, we find that the South is somewhat less likely than are departments from other regions to use the NCIC to check every firearm, although almost all local departments

Table 4-5
Evaluation of NCIC by Region and Size of Department

	REGION				SIZE OF DEPARTMENT				
	West	NE	NC	South	1-9	10-39	40-89	90-499	500 +
<u>Frequent Delays in Response</u>									
Very serious	5%	5%	1%	8%	13%	4%	2%	3%	7%
Somewhat serious	23	11	14	7	13	14	15	14	11
Not too serious	38	35	44	55	13	29	38	40	52
Not serious at all	34	49	41	30	61	53	45	43	30
N =	(90)	(111)	(102)	(127)	(12)	(54)	(46)	(108)	(211)
<u>Information not accurate</u>									
Very serious	5%	2%	4%	0%	12%	2%	2%	3%	2%
Somewhat serious	7	6	3	5	0	4	13	6	4
Not too serious	34	21	29	25	38	10	13	24	35
Not serious at all	54	71	64	70	50	84	72	67	59
N =	(90)	(112)	(102)	(127)	(12)	(54)	(46)	(108)	(211)
<u>Costs too High</u>									
Very serious	0%	1%	3%	1%	13%	4%	2%	1%	0%
Somewhat serious	10	7	5	5	13	8	11	7	5
Not too serious	33	29	31	37	13	14	36	29	39
Not serious at all	57	63	61	56	61	74	51	63	56
N =	(90)	(109)	(101)	(127)	(12)	(52)	(46)	(107)	(211)
<u>Information does not Help</u>									
Very serious	1%	1%	2%	1%	13%	4%	2%	1%	0%
Somewhat serious	4	4	4	9	0	2	2	2	9
Not too serious	21	21	23	23	13	10	17	23	26
Not serious at all	74	74	71	67	74	84	79	74	65
N =	(89)	(110)	(102)	(127)	(12)	(53)	(45)	(107)	(211)

Table 4-6

Evaluation of ATF by Region and Size of Department

	REGION				SIZE OF DEPARTMENT				
	West	NE	NC	South	1-9	10-39	40-89	90-499	500 +
<u>Frequent delays in Response</u>									
Very serious	2%	7%	2%	1%	0%	0%	3%	4%	3%
Somewhat serious	42	11	12	26	0	11	21	13	31
Not too serious	23	41	46	48	67	33	35	45	41
Not serious at all	33	41	40	25	33	56	41	38	25
N =	(58)	(71)	(72)	(73)	(4)	(38)	(28)	(79)	(125)
<u>Information not accurate</u>									
Very serious	9%	0%	0%	6%	0%	0%	0%	3%	6%
Somewhat serious	9	2	1	18	0	6	7	2	13
Not too serious	15	22	20	7	33	14	14	22	13
Not serious at all	66	76	78	69	67	81	79	72	69
N =	(57)	(70)	(73)	(73)	(4)	(38)	(28)	(76)	(125)
<u>Costs too High</u>									
Very serious	0%	1%	3%	0%	0%	3%	3%	0%	0%
Somewhat serious	8	3	4	1	33	3	3	3	3
Not too serious	15	20	19	34	0	14	27	22	25
Not serious at all	77	77	74	65	67	80	67	75	72
N =	(57)	(69)	(73)	(73)	(4)	(37)	(29)	(76)	(125)
<u>Information Does Not Help</u>									
Very serious	0%	0%	0%	5%	0%	0%	0%	1%	3%
Somewhat serious	8	4	5	12	0	5	0	3	12
Not too serious	7	16	15	25	33	8	17	20	16
Not serious at all	85	80	80	58	67	87	83	76	69
N =	(57)	(71)	(73)	(73)	(4)	(39)	(29)	(76)	(125)

say they use the NCIC for all or most firearms implicated in a crime or those confiscated or recovered. Local departments are very positive in their overall evaluation of the NCIC, with the West and the South somewhat less positive than the Northeast and North Central regions (70% of the local departments vs. 80%, respectively, respond that the NCIC is usually useful). And again the largest departments are relatively less positive toward the NCIC than are smaller departments.

Although the differences are not large, departments in the West are less positive toward the NCIC than are departments from other regions for three of the four specific problem areas. About 28% of the departments in the West, compared with 15% of the departments in the other regions, respond that frequent delays in response was a very or somewhat serious problem in using the NCIC. Some 12% of the local departments in the West compared to 5 to 8% in other regions respond that the accuracy of information obtained from the NCIC is a very or somewhat serious problem. Some 10% of the departments in the South feel that the usefulness of information obtained from the NCIC in helping to solve crimes is a very or somewhat serious problem, compared to about 5% of the departments in other regions.

Although small proportions of local departments find fault with the NCIC, at least three-quarters of the departments in all regions respond for each of the four problem areas identified that these were either not too serious or not serious at all in their use of the NCIC.

Only small differences are found in responses to the use of the NCIC by department size: of interest is that departments with 10 to 39 officers were consistently more positive toward the NCIC than were

departments of any other size, with higher proportions of departments in this size category responding that each of the problem areas was "not serious at all" in their use of the NCIC system.

Police Department Practices in Handling Confiscated or Found Weapons

Firearms may come into the possession of police departments in the following ways: 1) evidence in a case, in which firearms are taken when they constitute physical evidence for a case; 2) illegal possession, in which firearms are taken from individuals who were found in illegal possession or who used them in illegal ways; and 3) found firearms, in which firearms are discovered by the local police or reported to them for which no immediate owner is found.

Brill's (1977: 138-142) analysis of ten large U.S. police departments showed that there are a variety of procedures in place by which departments handle firearms that come into their possession. In some cities there are poor procedures immediately following a confiscation; this, he found, can lead to confusion and a potential loss of firearms. In these cities, the tendency was for the firearms not to be stored centrally after they were confiscated and instead kept in a police officer's locker or a district station locker. The police officer is under no immediate responsibility to submit the confiscated weapon to a central receiving and recording repository.

Other cities (e.g., Chicago, Baltimore, New York, Philadelphia and San Francisco) have more efficient systems. Brill found that their property rooms or ballistics units were open 24 hours a day, and that firearms must be stored in a central location and carefully signed in and

out. An example of a more efficient system is as follows.

Upon confiscating a firearm, the police officer takes it to the district station. There, the officer prepares a report and inventories the firearm on a multiple-copy form in a property inventory book. The information about the firearm is checked with the person in the property room, with two copies of the report remaining with the firearm, one copy going to the arrest sergeant, one copy remaining in the property inventory book and one copy going to the firearms section of the crime lab. At the crime lab, a ballistics test is run on the firearm and a report written. Three features of this type of system make it particularly efficient: 1) the crime lab is open 24 hours a day to receive confiscated firearms 2) the property is stored centrally and 3) records are duplicated so that receipts of delivery and transfer are stored and accounted for centrally.

For two of the ten cities Brill studied (San Francisco and Houston), state law makes it mandatory that police return many of the firearms they confiscate, even if the person from whom the firearm was confiscated was carrying it illegally. Brill did a spot check for San Francisco to determine what proportion of firearms were returned to individuals and found that 50% were.

In interviews with police, Brill noted that where there was recycling of confiscated weapons, police morale suffered. In cities where all confiscated weapons are destroyed, police morale is higher since the police in these cities believe that even if an arrest involving a confiscated weapon did not result in a conviction, that at least another gun "was taken off the streets". In those cities where recycling occurred, no

such feeling of police satisfaction was possible.

In addition to Brill's work, there are other data against which to compare our survey results on the disposal procedures for confiscated weapons. A stratified probability sample of 440 state, county and municipal police departments was surveyed by 1972 by the Law Enforcement Standards Laboratory of the National Bureau of Standards (NBS, 1977). The questionnaire included a section on the types of weapons confiscated and disposal procedures used by departments. The responses to these questionnaire items are shown in Table 4-7.

Two types of percentages are shown in this table: one for the proportions of departments that use a particular disposal method(s), and the second for the proportion of confiscated handguns disposed by particular methods. Note that these disposal procedures are for handguns, which in 1972 comprised about three-fourths of the firearms confiscated. From this table one sees that 70% of the handguns were destroyed by melting, cutting, dumping in deep water or crushing. Recycling of handguns by issuing them to officers; selling to museums, collectors and others; or returning them to owners accounted for disposal procedures of 20% of the handguns confiscated. These proportions are heavily dominated by handguns confiscated in the 50 largest cities, whose handgun confiscations represented 82% of all confiscated handguns for which disposal methods information was supplied by all departments.

Of note are differences found among the small and large-sized departments: state police and departments in the 50 largest cities showed the highest proportions of handguns destroyed (84% and 72%, respectively), compared to departments size 1-9 and 10-49 (8% and 13%, respectively), or departments larger than 50 officers (excluding the

Table 4-7

Disposal of Handguns^a

<u>Disposal Method</u>	<u>Percent of Departments using Method^b</u>	<u>Percent of Handguns Disposed by Method</u>
Returned to owner	50%	13%
Turned over to other agency	32%	7
Issued to officers	24%	2
Dumped in deep water	10%	15
Sold or given to arms museum or other collection	15%	2
Cut with torches/hack saw	9%	2
Melted in furnace	8%	48
Crushed	7%	5
Resold	7%	3
Other method	24%	3
TOTAL	(399) ^c	100%
		66,307 ^c handguns

^aSource of table: U.S. Department of Commerce, National Bureau of Standards (1977). Tables 11A-2, 11C-1, 11C-2 and 11C-3.

^bPercents in this column add to more than 100% since more than one method can be used.

^cThe number of departments providing information on disposal procedures was 349 out of the 440 departments (77%) who provided information on 66,307 handguns in their possession in 1972. Note that handguns comprised 77% of the firearms confiscated and shoulder weapons, 23%.

fifth largest departments, 30%). In contrast, the smaller departments were more likely to recycle their handguns, predominantly by returning them to owners (40 to 50% returned to owners for departments sized 1 to 49 officers) than were departments in the fifty largest cities (13% returned to owners). Departments sized 50 or more officers (excluding the 50 largest departments) returned 35% of confiscated handguns to owners.

Our questionnaire asked local departments in our sample to specify what custody, storage, and disposal procedures are taken for three types of confiscated firearms situations. The result from these items are shown in Table 4-8. In that table, one sees that with one exception, there is little variation among the three types of police confiscation situations. Thus, it appears that whether firearms are confiscated for evidence, recovered because they are illegally possessed or found by the local police, police departments generally follow the same procedures.

For custody procedures, almost none of the local departments allow officers to retain custody or to keep the firearms in other than a police property room. Note, however, that what constitutes "property room" may be subject to widely varying definitions and to varying degrees of formal and informal access. In an analysis of this item by size of department (table not shown), we find that there is a tendency for officers in smaller departments (less than 40 officers) to retain firearms (14% of the local departments in this size category allow this procedure).

For the three types of disposal procedures, one sees that about 10 to 15% of the local departments report that they may eventually sell confiscated firearms to firearms dealers or sell them in a police property

Table 4-8

Local Police Department Practices for Confiscated or Recovered Firearms

Practice	Evidence In a Case				Illegally Possessed				Found Firearms			
	Yes	No	*	N	Yes	No	*	N	Yes	No	*	N
Receipt given to the person from whom firearm is taken	48%	52	0	(432)	40%	60	0	(421)	--	--	-	---
Firearm remains in the custody of officer	3%	97	0	(434)	2%	98	0	(426)	2%	98	0	(395)
Firearm stored in a police property room	99%	1	0	(435)	99%	1	0	(426)	99%	1	0	(411)
Firearm sold to dealer after period of time	9%	90	1	(431)	9%	90	1	(419)	14%	85	1	(406)
Firearm sold in police property auction after period of time	12%	86	2	(433)	12%	86	2	(425)	15%	83	2	(408)
Eventually possible for owner to reclaim firearm	90%	8	2	(432)	47%	52	1	(422)	95%	5	0	(412)
Firearm destroyed after some period of time	83%	14	3	(420)	85%	12	3	(397)	82%	15	5	(397)

*Category includes "Depends on court", "Sometimes", and "For certain weapons only".

auction, while 82 to 85% of the departments will eventually destroy confiscated firearms. These proportions are roughly comparable to those found in the NBS survey for methods of handgun disposal. Like the NBS survey, we find departmental size variations in the disposal procedures. Confiscated firearms (for evidence and illegally possessed) may be sold back to dealers in higher proportions in the South and West (about 16%), compared to 5% of the local departments in the Northeast and North Central regions. For found weapons, sales to dealers are even higher for local departments in the South and West (about 20% each), compared to 13% of the departments in the North Central region and 4% of the departments in the Northeast. Sales of found firearms to dealers are more likely in the largest departments (500 or more officers) where 20% may resell the weapon than for smaller departments (where only 5 to 10% may resell). Table 4-9 presents the regional variation in weapon storage and disposal procedures.

Firearms confiscated for evidence or illegally possessed are auctioned in highest proportion in the North Central states (22%) compared to 14% each in the West and the South, and none in the Northeastern departments. Slightly higher proportions of 2 to 4 percentage points in each region auctions off found firearms.

Departments in the West destroy firearms in higher proportion (92%) than do those in other region (about 80 to 83%). Local departments in the Northeast and North Central states are less likely to destroy found firearms (75% and 81%, respectively) than are those departments in the South and West (88% and 86%, respectively).

Table 4-9

Local Police Department Practices for Confiscated or Recovered Firearms by Region

Percent of Departments that allow:	Evidence In a Case				Illegally Possessed				Found Firearms			
	West	NE	NC	South	West	NE	NC	South	West	NE	NC	South
Receipt given to person from whom taken	49% (90)	62% (112)	47% (104)	37% (126)	42% (90)	53% (106)	35% (103)	29% (123)	--	--	--	--
Firearms remains in the custody of the officer	0% (90)	3% (111)	5% (106)	2% (127)	0% (90)	4% (108)	5% (105)	1% (125)	1% (76)	2% (105)	4% (97)	0% (118)
Firearm stored in a police property room	100% (90)	98% (112)	100% (106)	99% (127)	100% (90)	99% (108)	100% (105)	99% (125)	100% (84)	97% (105)	100% (100)	99% (121)
Firearm sold to dealer after period of time	14% (90)	2% (110)	6% (104)	12% (127)	16% (90)	2% (107)	5% (102)	12% (120)	18% (80)	4% (106)	13% (98)	20% (121)
Firearm destroyed	91% (90)	80% (110)	80% (102)	83% (127)	92% (90)	84% (107)	83% (98)	82% (125)	88% (80)	75% (105)	81% (95)	86% (117)
Firearm sold in police auction after time	14% (90)	0% (111)	22% (105)	15% (127)	15% (90)	0% (108)	22% (103)	12% (124)	18% (81)	2% (106)	24% (100)	17% (121)
Eventually possible for owner to reclaim firearm	93% (90)	87% (111)	87% (105)	93% (127)	48% (85)	34% (109)	51% (105)	52% (124)	100% (84)	90% (105)	93% (101)	97% (122)

Two items asked whether receipts are given to individuals whose firearms are taken and whether individuals can reclaim the firearms. About half of the departments give receipts to individuals, while it is possible for individuals in 90% to 95% of the local departments to reclaim firearms that were evidence in a case or found firearms. By contrast, in about half of the departments, individuals may be able to reclaim firearms found to be in illegal possession (a proportion that corresponds with Brill's "spot check" of firearms confiscated and returned to individuals in San Francisco). Regional and department size variations are found in receipts given to individuals for their firearms and for the possibility of individuals to reclaim firearms found to be illegally possessed.

Higher proportions of local departments in the Northeast give receipts for firearms taken in evidence and firearms found to be illegally possessed. For firearms taken in evidence, 62% of the departments in the Northeast give receipts to individuals, compared to 49% of the departments in the West, 47% of the North Central departments and 37% of the Southern departments. Departments are less likely overall to give receipts to individuals for firearms found to be illegally possessed, but the regional variation is similar to that for firearms taken in evidence. For firearms illegally possessed, 53% of the local departments in the Northeast give receipts to individuals, compared to 42% in the West, 35% in the North Central region and 29% in the South.

Although there are no important regional differences in the possibility of individuals to reclaim found firearms or firearms used in evidence, there are differences for reclaiming firearms found to be illegally possessed. About one-third of the departments in the Northeast

report that individuals are able to do this, compared to about half of the departments in the other regions. In addition, individuals may be more likely to reclaim illegally possessed firearms from the largest police departments (57% of the departments with 500 or more officers) than in departments sized 90 to 499 officers (40% report that individuals can reclaim these weapons) and departments with 10 to 89 officers (30%). (Disposals procedures by size of department not shown in table.)

Overall, our analysis of these items confirms what the 1972 NBS study shows, police departments are far more likely to destroy firearms than to recycle them. We find that departments in the Northeast are least likely to recycle firearms, either by returning them to individuals, selling them to dealers, or auctioning them off for re-sale. Note, though, that departments in the Northeast are not more likely to destroy firearms than are local departments from other regions. It appears that firearms may more often be retained by Northeastern departments. By contrast, local departments in the South and the West are more likely to re-sell firearms at auctions and to dealers, with departments in the West more likely to destroy firearms than departments in other regions. Local police departments in the North Central region fall in between departmental practices in the other three regions, although they tend to be able to sell firearms in auctions more often than departments in other areas. One finds, in general, that local departments in the South, West and North Central states are more likely to be able to either re-sell (under certain circumstances) or to destroy firearms confiscated by them than are departments in the Northeast who are more likely to either retain or destroy confiscated firearms.

Weapon Data Recorded by the Police

The case reports filed by officers in their day-to-day enforcement activities are the basic source of information about weapons used in crimes, confiscated, or found by the police. Any information concerning a weapon is typically recorded for the purpose of the arrest and/or further investigation of the case. This information on weapons can also provide a possible data source about the use of weapons in society.

In order to understand the kinds of information recorded by the police about weapons under different crime situations, we asked a series of questions covering 10 typical police cases in which a weapon might be involved. The situations presented to the police were meant to vary the circumstances and presence of a weapon where:¹

- 1) The police may have the weapon in their possession
- 2) The weapon may be involved in a crime
- 3) A report of a weapon is given by the victim but the weapon is not recovered.

For each situation, we asked about the kinds of weapon information which would "Actually be recorded", "Sought but not recorded" and "Neither sought nor recorded" as part of the case record. We expected that the kind of detailed weapon data recorded by the police might vary by the circumstances of the weapon in the case.

Table 5-1 shows the percentage of local departments in our survey that respond that the specified weapon information would "Actually be

¹The questionnaire in Appendix A shows these ten situations as presented to the police department respondents.

CHAPTER 5

WEAPON DATA RECORDED IN STANDARD CASE REPORTS

recorded". Note that for the most part, all departments respond that they record detailed weapon data in the case report, regardless of the crime situation. The percentages are especially high in situations where the type of weapon information is relevant and necessary to the case report. For example, the type of firearm or weapon, serial number, manufacturer and caliber of weapon are always recorded. Departments also record whether the gun was loaded at the time of the incident and are very likely to record whether the firearm was recently fired or fired during the incident. Departments are less likely to check if a firearm has been recently fired in the cases of a found weapon and an illegal possession case, although over half of the departments say that information would actually be recorded.

In the cases where an arrest is made with a weapon involved, four out of five departments say that a check on the prior firearms record of the suspect would be recorded as part of the case report. The other local departments (roughly 20%) generally state that a check of the prior record of a suspect would "be sought but not necessarily recorded".

The value of the weapon is not always recorded in the case report, except in the situation of a stolen weapon where the value of the weapon may be useful. The age of the firearm is seldom recorded: in all of the situations, except death by a firearm, the majority of departments report that the age of the weapon is neither sought nor recorded. Several departments noted on their questionnaires that they would be concerned with the age of a weapon only in those infrequent cases where an antique weapon was involved.

Table 5-1

Percent of Local Departments that Actually Record Weapon Information in Case Reports:
Type of Information by Type of Weapon Situation

Situation	WEAPON INFORMATION								
	Type of Firearm or Handgun	Serial Number	Manufacturer	Loaded	Firearm fired	Value	Age	Caliber	Check on Prior Record of Suspect
Found Weapon	100%	100%	98%	84%	51%	46%	32%	100%	--
Report of Stolen Weapon	100%	100%	100%	--	--	95%	49%	100%	--
Robbery with Gun Reported	100%	--	--	--	100%	--	--	--	--
Arrest with Possession of Handgun	--	100%	99%	100%	77%	35%	29%	100%	84%
Illegal Possession of Handgun	--	99%	98%	98%	60%	38%	29%	99%	84%
Assault with Firearm Arrest	100%	100%	99%	99%	96%	32%	26%	100%	88%
Rape with Gun Reported	100%	--	--	--	99%	--	--	--	--
Gun Accident	100%	99%	98%	--	--	27%	27%	100%	--
Illegal Hunting	89%	89%	88%	--	--	27%	22%	88%	73%
Death from Handgun	100%	100%	100%	--	--	38%	47%	100%	--

--Question about this type of information was not asked for this situation as it is not relevant.

In addition to recording the basic information about a weapon in the case report, most departments report that other actions concerning the weapon are always taken. Table 5-2 Panel A shows that almost all local departments would attempt to determine whether a weapon was lost or stolen in cases where a weapon was recovered or confiscated. Panel B shows that they would usually attempt to determine the owner of a weapon in the case of a found weapon and always in the case of death by a weapon.

There is a little more variation in whether the police would determine if a gun was illegally possessed in different situations. (See Panel C) Certainly, the police are much more likely to make this type of check in the case of an assault or an arrest with possession of a weapon (all local departments would definitely or probably take this action). However, even in the cases of a gun accident or a report of a stolen weapon, the local police are very likely to make a check on the legality of the possession (77.9% and 55.3% of the departments, respectively, would definitely do this).

In the cases where a gun has been used in a crime, all departments report that the victim would be asked to describe the weapon involved and that this description of the weapon would become part of the case report record (Table 5-2 Panel D).

In the case of a stolen weapon, all departments say that a report to the NCIC system would be made and 83.3% say they would make a similar report to a local or regional stolen weapons information system. The 10.4% of the departments that would make no report to such a system may be in areas where none exists.

Table 5-2

Actions by Police Departments Concerning Weapons by Situation

A: Would you attempt to determine if the weapon was lost or stolen?

Situation	N	Yes	Yes	No	No	Unsure
		Definitely	Probably	Probably	Definitely	
Found Weapon	(441)	98.1%	1.8	0	0	.1
Arrest with Possession of Handgun	(439)	99.5%	.5	0	0	0
Illegal Possession of Handgun	(436)	96.0%	4.0	0	0	0
Assault with Firearm Arrest	(439)	96.9%	2.1	1.1	0	0
Death by Handgun	(439)	99.9%	.1	0	0	0

B: Would you attempt to determine the owner of the firearm?

Situation	N	Yes	Yes	No	No	Unsure
		Definitely	Probably	Probably	Definitely	
Found Weapon	(441)	82.3%	11.0	6.7	0	0
Death by Handgun	(439)	99.9%	0	0	0	.1

C: Would you attempt to determine if the firearm was legally possessed?

Situation	N	Yes	Yes	No	No	Unsure
		Definitely	Probably	Probably	Definitely	
Stolen Weapon	(436)	55.3%	25.1	17.9	1.6	.2
Arrest with Handgun	(439)	90.9%	6.8	2.3	0	0
Assault with Firearm Arrest	(439)	88.8%	11.2	0	0	0
Gun Accident	(439)	77.9%	16.1	5.9	.2	0

Table 5-2 (continued)

D: Would the victim be asked to describe the weapon involved?

<u>Situation</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Yes</u>		<u>No</u>		<u>Unsure</u>
		<u>Definitely</u>	<u>Probably</u>	<u>Probably</u>	<u>Definitely</u>	
Robbery with Gun Reported	(439)	97.9%	2.1	0	0	0
Rape at Gunpoint Reported	(439)	97.5%	2.5	0	0	0

IF YES: Would the description become part of the case record?

<u>Situation</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Unsure</u>
Robbery with Gun Report	(438)	100%	0	0
Rape at Gunpoint Report	(439)	100%	0	0

E: Would a stolen weapon be reported to NCIC or local system?

<u>Action Taken</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Unsure</u>
Stolen Gun Reported to NCIC	(441)	99.8%	.2	0
Stolen Gun Reported to Local System	(440)	83.3%	10.4	6.2

All departments report that they would always record the presence of a weapon in the commission of a crime as part of the case report. This action would be taken regardless of whether the gun was directly involved in the crime incident or not (Table 5-3). In the case where the gun was not directly involved, but in the possession of the suspect at time of arrest, over 90% of the local departments report that they would always record this fact in the report.

In summary then, it appears that the local police have a great appreciation for the importance of complete reporting about any weapons that are involved in any case. This detailed information is important so that weapons confiscated as evidence can be validated; that the presence of a weapon may be used by the prosecutor's office for possible charges; and by the judge at the imposition of sentencing. Local police departments clearly report that their policies are to include all relevant weapons-related information in the case report.

We cannot tell from the information in this survey if this detailed weapon information is, in fact, recorded in all case reports by all police officers. However, we can further analyze the content of the standard report forms used by local police departments (i.e., Do the forms contain explicit instructions about the weapon details to be recorded? Is there a special place on the form where weapon information can be noted?). The local departments that use an open-ended narrative report form (often a blank page form) may actually be carefully noting in great detail all of the relevant information about a weapon in the report. But the use of this type of form would make it more difficult to later retrieve weapon information from case reports for aggregate summaries.

Table 5-3

Percent of Departments that Record
Presence of Weapon in Case Report

	<u>N</u>	<u>Always</u>	<u>Usually</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Not Generally</u>
<u>If the firearm was:</u>					
In Suspect's Possession but Not Used	(438)	94.4%	3.7	2.0	0
Brandished or Displayed but Not Fired	(421)	97.3%	2.7	0.1	0
Fired During Incident	(423)	99.1%	.9	0	0

For this reason, the local departments were asked in our survey if their standard report forms contained a special box or section asking about the weapons used or confiscated in an incident. Table 5-4 shows that 64.9% of the departments report that their forms contain such a space for recording the presence of a weapon and 56.7% have a space on their forms for recording the confiscation of a weapon. Although over 90% of the departments report that the presence of a weapon is always recorded as part of the case record, a much lower number of departments use report forms that might facilitate and insure the recording of this weapon information.

This type of report form varies by size of department. The larger police departments are more likely to have such report forms; of the largest departments, 71.9% report that their forms have a box to record the presence of a weapon, a figure which is still lower than the overall number of departments that state that weapon information is always recorded. This is not to say that the police respondents are inaccurate in stating that all relevant weapon information is always recorded. However, according to the police themselves, there are many departments that use report forms which contain no explicit sections about the presence or confiscation of weapons.

Police Department Standard Report Forms

In addition to asking the police about their policies on recording weapon information in case reports, we asked that they submit blank copies of all of their standard report forms. We have seen that there is little variation in the amount or kind of weapon information that departments say is recorded in case reports. However, there is variation in the types

Table 5-4

Use of Report Forms which have a Question^b
on Presence of Weapon in Case by Size of Department

A: Report forms have a box to record the presence of a weapon?

	Size of Department ^a					
	Total	1-9	10-39	40-89	90-400	500 +
Yes	64.9%	25.0%	70.6%	43.5%	60.9%	71.9%
No	34.6	75.0	29.4	56.5	37.4	28.1
Unsure	.4	0	0	0	1.8	0
N =	(442)	(12)	(54)	(45)	(109)	(222)

B: Report forms have a box to record the confiscation of a weapon?

	Size of Department ^a					
	Total	1-9	10-39	40-89	90-499	500 +
Yes	56.7%	37.5%	58.8%	43.5%	50.0%	63.2%
No	42.0	62.5	41.2	56.5	48.6	35.1
Unsure	1.2	0	0	0	1.4	1.8
N =	(441)	(12)	(54)	(45)	(108)	(222)

^aNumber of sworn officers from LEAA data file.

^bThese two tables are according to the police respondent's answer to two questions in our survey (see Appendix A).

of report forms used by local police departments, particularly with regard to weapon information.

Report forms were returned by 83% of the departments that responded to our survey. The analysis in this section focuses on these forms from 389 departments.² A coding scheme was developed to categorize the departmental report forms along several dimensions:

- 1) The type of report form used in a complaint of or incident of a violent crime
- 2) The type of property report form
- 3) The kinds of weapon information specifically requested on these two forms
- 4) Detailed information requested on the form about how the weapon was used and about any injuries or deaths caused by the weapon.

A more detailed description of the report form coding scheme and the variables is found in Appendix C.

A basic description of the report forms used by local police in the case of a violent crime is shown in Table 5-5. Panel A shows the distribution of the types of forms used for the report of a violent crime. The majority of departments (71.2%) use an all-purpose report form in this instance. This form is usually labeled as "Incident Report" or "Complaint Form" and there is no special form designated specifically for a violent crime report. Officers in these departments would use this same general report form in the case of a rape or an assault and in the case of a trespassing complaint or a report of stolen property. Thus, the format and content of these general report forms must cover a wide range of possible crime incidents.

²This is the weighted number of departments (see Chapter 2 for discussion of sample and analysis weights).

Table 5-5

Standard Report Forms Used by Local Police for Violent Crimes

A: <u>Type of Report Form Used</u>	Percent
All Purpose Incident Form	71.2%
Special Violent Crime Form	11.2
Combination of these two types	17.6
N =	(389)

B: <u>Type of Weapon Detail Requested on Form</u>	
Narrative Only	16.3%
Open space labeled "WEAPON"	46.8
Special box or codes with weapon detail explicitly requested	37.0
N =	(389)

C: Type of Report Form by Type of Weapon Detail Requested

<u>Type of Weapon Detail Requested on Form</u>	<u>Type of Report Form Used</u>		
	All-Purpose	Special Violent Crime	Combination
Narrative Only	21.6%	0.9%	4.8%
Weapon Space	47.1	67.4	32.3
Detailed weapon box	31.4	31.7	62.9
N =	(277)	(44)	(69)

Table 5-5 (continued)

D: Information on How Weapon Used in Violent Crime

Narrative Only	57.3%
Space for how weapon used	30.8
Special box with detailed questions or codes	11.9
N =	(389)

E: Information on Injury to Victims in Violent Crime

Injury information requested	55.2%
Not called for on form, narrative	44.8
N =	(389)

Only about one in ten departments have a special "Violent Crime Report" or "Crime Against Person Report". These forms are designed specifically for this type of crime. The remaining 17.6% of the departments have a combination of a general report form and a supplemental form which is used in the case of a violent crime against persons. The supplemental form requests more detailed information about the violent crime incident.

The type of report form which is used in the case of a violent crime does not necessarily indicate the type of detailed weapon information that is requested on that form. Many of the general incident report forms contain more detailed weapon questions than some of the special purpose "Violent Crime" report forms. Panel B in Table 5-5 shows the type of weapon detail requested on the report form used for a violent crime. The first category, "Narrative", refers to those forms which are completely open-ended or contain no weapon specifications. Any information which an officer notes about the weapon on these forms is contained in the written text. Sixteen percent of the local police departments in our survey use such a report form.

Almost half of the departments have forms which contain an open space or area labeled "Weapon" where an officer enters the relevant information about the weapon involved in the incident. However, these forms give no explicit instructions about the type of weapon information to be entered.³ The remaining 37% of the police departments use a report form which contains an area or space with detailed weapon questions or codes.

³Detailed instructions about the kind of weapon information to be entered on these forms may be contained in the department's report-writing manuals or provided to the officers in their training.

In this area of the report form, there are explicit instructions or questions about such weapon details as the type of weapon, caliber, serial number, etc. The details on this type of close-ended report form are described more fully later in this chapter.

A total of 84% of the departments that provided copies of their standard report forms use a form for a violent crime incident that contains a space or area where weapon information can be entered. On the questionnaire, 65% of the respondents from local police departments state that their report forms contain a special weapons section.⁴ It is clear that the majority of departments use a report form for the case of a violent crime which facilitates the recording and retrieval of weapon information.

Panel C of Table 5-5 shows the distribution of the type of weapon detail requested by the type of report form used. While 21% of the all-purpose incident forms contain only a narrative account of any weapon information, 31% of these forms do have detailed weapon questions. The special violent crime report forms and the combination forms all contain some designated section where weapon information is recorded; the departments that use a combination of general purpose and a supplement report form are more likely to use forms which contain a box requesting detailed weapon information.

In addition to the recording of the general information about any weapons used in a violent crime, many police departments use a report form which requests information about how the weapon was used in the

⁴The relationship between size of department and the type of weapon detail requested on standard report forms (see Table 5-4) and the lower return rate of forms by the smaller departments explain some of the difference in these two percentages.

crime and any injuries to the victim (Panel D and E of Table 5-5). On the majority of report forms used by the police, any details about how the weapon was used (e.g., gun fired, displayed, threatened use, etc.) would be contained in the narrative account of the crime. About a third of the departments use a report form which contains an open-space typically labeled "How weapon used?" or "How force used?"; an additional 12% use forms with more detailed questions and categories to describe how the weapon was used in the violent crime. Slightly over half of the local departmental forms used in the report of a violent crime contain a direct question on the victim's injuries or hospitalization. Officers in the remaining departments would have to enter this injury information in the written account of the crime.

For the departments that use an incident report form which contains a special section requesting weapon detail (37% of the local departments use such a report form for violent crimes), Table 5-6 presents the kind of weapon information specifically requested. The type of weapon is almost always requested on these forms; most departmental report forms (73%) also request that the type of firearm be recorded. Other weapon characteristics are less likely to be explicitly called for; less than half of the forms request caliber or finish of the weapon and only a quarter request the serial number or manufacturer information. The age of the weapon is seldom requested on these incident report forms.

It is not surprising that the type of weapon or firearm is the information most often specifically requested on the incident report forms that contain detailed weapon questions. Most detailed descriptions of the weapon (i.e., serial number, caliber, etc.) are usually available only in

Table 5-6

Report Form Used by Local Police for a Violent Crime Incident:
Type of Weapon Detail Requested (N=144)^a

<u>Type of Weapon Detail</u>	<u>Information Explicitly Requested</u>	
	Yes	No
Type of Weapon	97.3%	2.7
Type of Firearm	73.0%	27.0
Caliber/Size/Barrel Length	42.2%	57.8
Color/Finish	41.9%	58.1
Serial Number/ID	28.5%	71.5
Manufacturer/Make	26.5%	73.5
Age of Weapon	0.5%	99.5
Other Information ^b	28.1%	71.9

^aThis information about the specific weapon detail was coded only for those police departments that used an incident report form which contained a special box or codes explicitly requesting details about the weapon. (See Appendix C for coding scheme)

^bThis residual category contains such details as value, special markings or engravings, information about a knife or other weapon, etc.

cases where the police recover or confiscate the weapon that was involved in the incident. The victim, in making a complaint to the police, is unlikely to know, for example, the serial number of the gun involved in the crime. In the cases where the police do obtain a weapon (through the arrest of an armed suspect or the recovery or confiscation of a gun), the detailed description of the gun is often recorded not on the incident report but on the standard property report form.

Table 5-7 presents a description of the types of property report forms used by the 389 local police departments in our survey. Panel A of this table shows that the majority of departments (55.7%) record information about any property in a case on the general incident or complaint form; these departments do not have a separate property report form. The other local police departments either use a separate property report form (12%) or the property information is entered on both the incident report and a property report form (combination category) by 32% of the departments.

Regardless of the type of property report form used by the police (a separate form or a section on the incident report form), only a third of these forms contain a box or code for recording the recovery or confiscation of a weapon. The remaining forms (67%) have no such specific weapon question; instead, they have a section labeled, for example, "Property - Please Describe". Thus the majority of local departments use a property form which does not specifically note the involvement of a weapon. On the questionnaire, respondents from 56% of the local departments state that their standard report forms have a box or area to record the confiscation or recovery of a weapon. This higher percent may be the

Table 5-7

Description of Standard Report Forms Used by Local Police
For Recovered, Confiscated, Found or Stolen Property

A: Type of Form Used for Property Recovered or Confiscated

Property section on general incident report form	55.7%
Separate Property Report Form	12.2
Combination of these two types	32.1
N =	(389)

B: Is there a special box for weapon recovered or stolen?

Yes, box or code for weapon	30.7%
No, "Property" only or open-ended	67.0
Property form not submitted ^a	2.3
N =	(389)

C: Type of Property Form Detail

Narrative only	13.9%
Description requested in open space (no headings)	34.6
Detailed headings or requests	49.2
Property form not submitted	2.3
N =	(389)

^aFor 9 departments, there was a reference to a separate property form on other standard form but no property form was submitted.

result of some departments who use forms with no specific weapon question responding "yes" on the questionnaire because their property report forms do request in a general instruction that all confiscated property be recorded and fully described. Analysis of the actual property report forms shows, however, that only 30% of these forms have an explicit weapon question.⁵

Since many departments use property report forms with a more general format, we analyzed the type of form detail regardless of specific reference to a weapon or firearm.⁶ That is, what is the detail requested on the property form about any property involved in the case? Panel C of Table 5-7 shows the amount of detail requested on these property forms. Half of the local departments (49.2%) use property forms which contain detailed headings or questions about the property confiscated or recovered (see Table 5-8 for a description of the specific property details requested). One third of the departments use a property form which simply requests that the property be fully described. These forms provide the officer with no specific questions or reminders about the details that should be recorded. Again, these departments may provide such instructions to their officers in separate manuals or during training. The remaining 13% of the local police departments would record a weapon, firearm or other property involved in a case in their narrative account of the incident.

⁵There is little variation in this percentage by size of department. Of the 207 large departments (with more than 500 officers), only 37.7% have forms with an explicit question about the recovery of a weapon.

⁶Most departments seem to regard weapons or firearms as no different from any other type of property and have designed property report forms which are applicable to all property types.

These departments tend to have one completely open-ended "Case Report" form.

Table 5-8 presents the type of property detail specifically requested on the report forms used in the 191 departmental forms that contain detailed property headings or questions (see Table 5-7 Panel C). These categories are general and refer to any type of property (including weapons). The two descriptions found in the headings or questions on most of these property forms are the serial number and the value of the property, two categories which are not often found in the detailed questions about a weapon on the violent crime incident report form. The serial number on any property found, recovered, confiscated or reported stolen to the local police is needed for a trace or report to the NCIC system and for a complete description of the property as evidence in a case. The value of the property item is most likely recorded for the UCR reports of stolen property which are made by the local departments. Note that on the questionnaire, the police report that the value of a weapon would actually be recorded mainly in the case of a stolen weapon (Table 5-1).

Other descriptive categories about any property are less likely to be specifically requested on the property report form; three-quarters of these forms request manufacturer or make; slightly less than half of them request the caliber or size⁷ or color of the item; and few forms specifically instruct that the age of the item should be recorded.

⁷Few of the property reports specifically mention "caliber". Most of the forms in this category instruct that the size of the property item should be recorded.

Table 5-8

Type of Detail Requested on Property Report Forms
That Request Details (N=191 Departments)

	<u>Information Explicitly Requested</u>	
	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Serial Number	98.0%	2.0
Value	95.3%	4.7
Manufacturer/Make	74.3%	25.7
Size/Caliber	44.5%	55.5
Color	44.2%	55.8
Age	7.7%	92.3
Other Information ^a	19.6%	80.4

^aThis category includes such questions or headings as "Condition of item", "Special markings or engravings", and "Other information - please explain".

Table 5-9 shows the relationship between the type of weapon information requested on the standard report forms and the size of the local department. As expected, the largest departments are more likely to use report forms which request detailed weapon information than are smaller departments. Panel A of this table shows that 47.2% of the departments with 500 or more sworn officers use a violent crime report form with detailed weapon questions or instructions; only 3.8% of these large departments use a narrative type of report form. The departments with 40 to 89 officers are more likely to use a narrative type of incident report form (41.5%) with only 22% using a report form with detailed weapon information.

A similar pattern is shown in Panel B for the type of details requested on the property report form by size of local department. Smaller departments are more likely to use a report report form which is either narrative or contains only an open-ended property description space. A majority of the largest departments (56.6%) use a property report form which specifically requests that details about the property be recorded.

Panel C of Table 5-9 shows that less than one-quarter of the small departments use a property report form which has an explicit question about the confiscation or recovery of a weapon in an incident. More of the largest departments use such a property report form; however, two-thirds of these large departments' report forms do not explicitly ask about the recovery or confiscation of a weapon.

Table 5-9

Weapon Detail on Standard Police Report Forms
by Size of Department

A: Type of Weapon Detail on Violent Crime Report

<u>Size of Department</u> ^b	<u>N</u>	<u>Narrative Only</u>	<u>Weapon Space</u>	<u>Detailed Weapon Space or Box</u>
1 to 9 officers	(9)	66.7%	33.3	0.0
10 to 39	(43)	22.0%	48.8	29.3
40 to 89	(40)	41.5%	36.6	22.0
90 to 499	(90)	26.2%	46.4	27.5
500 or more	(207)	3.8%	49.1	47.2
TOTAL	(389)	16.3%	46.8	37.0

B: Type of Weapon Detail on Property Report

<u>Size of Department</u> ^b	<u>N</u>	<u>Narrative Only</u>	<u>Property Space</u>	<u>Details Requested</u>	<u>NA</u> ^a
1 to 9 officers	(9)	33.3%	50.0	16.7	0.0
10 to 39	(43)	17.1%	43.9	39.0	0.0
40 to 89	(40)	22.0%	46.3	31.7	0.0
90 to 499	(90)	12.9%	37.8	48.1	1.3
500 or more	(207)	11.3%	28.3	56.6	3.8
TOTAL	(389)	13.9%	34.6	49.2	2.3

Table 5-9 (continued)

C: Box or code on Property Form to Record Weapon Confiscation

<u>Size of Department</u> ^b	<u>N</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>NA</u> ^a
1 to 9 officers	(9)	16.7%	83.3	0.0
10 to 39 officers	(43)	24.4%	75.6	0.0
40 to 89 officers	(40)	14.6%	85.4	0.0
90 to 499 officers	(90)	26.2%	72.5	1.3
500 or more	(207)	37.7%	58.5	3.8
TOTAL	(389)	30.7%	67.0	2.3

^aProperty report forms not submitted for 9 departments, although other report forms indicate the existence of a separate property form.

^bNumber of sworn officers from LEAA data file.

Summary

The information about weapons that is recorded in the individual police case reports provides the basis for any aggregate summaries that local police department might prepare on weapons and crime topics. According to our survey, local police report that they actually record many details about weapons that are involved in a variety of different in their case reports. However, the ability and ease of information retrieval from these case reports probably varies by the actual format and content of the standard report forms used. As seen in this chapter, there are many different types of police report forms which vary in the amount of weapon detail explicitly requested. Some police departments use a completely blank general report form; individual officers provide all of the weapon information as part of their narrative account of the incident. Other local departments use a completely close-ended form; officers must answer explicit questions or fill in spaces designed specifically for weapon data. Many of these detailed report forms are also fully coded in preparation for computer data entry of the case report information.

Table 5-10 summarizes the types of report forms used with regard to the recording of weapon information. This table combines the type of weapon detail requested on the incident form and the property report form. These categories then summarize the ease of information entry and retrieval from individual case reports.

The first category covers the 20.8% of the departments in our survey that use an incident report form with detailed, close-ended questions about weapons and a property report form with detailed questions or instructions.

Table 5-10

Distribution of Local Law Enforcement Departments by Overall Weapon Detail Required on Standard Report Forms

<u>Weapon Detail on Incident Report Form^a</u>	<u>Details Requested on Property Report Form^b</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Detailed questions	Detailed questions	20.8%
Detailed questions	Description space	12.4
Detailed questions or Weapon Space	Narrative	8.4
Weapon Space	Detailed questions or Description space	41.8
Narrative	Narrative	16.6
N =		(389)

^a See Table 5-5 for the distribution of departments by type of detail on incident report form.

^b See Table 5-7 for the distribution of departments by type of detail on property report form.

Another 12.4% of the departments use an incident report form with detailed weapon questions and a special property description space. These two categories of forms facilitate both the recording of weapon information and the retrieval of this information for summary reports.

The largest percentage of departments (41.8%) use an incident and property report form which provides simply an open-ended space or area where weapon information can be recorded. While these spaces are open-ended (there are no specific questions, codes or headings to remind the officers of the weapon information to be recorded), these forms do provide specific areas from which weapon data can later be retrieved. The compilation of summary reports from these report forms would be easier than from the narrative type of report form. Sixteen percent of the local police departments use a narrative report form for both the incident report and the property report. Any weapon information is entered on these report forms as part of the text report summary of the case. Retrieval of any weapon information from these departmental reports would involve reading (or skimming) the entire case report.

CHAPTER 6

WEAPON INFORMATION SUMMARY REPORTING ACTIVITIES AND CAPABILITIES OF LOCAL DEPARTMENTS

The ability and willingness of local law enforcement agencies to generate detailed annual summaries on weapons and crime topics is a function not only of the weapon information contained in the individual case reports but other factors which affect summary reporting capability. Such factors include the department's current summary reporting activity, its perception of the amount of work already involved in such reports and its current technological capability, particularly in the area of computerization.

Brill's (1977) study of police departments in ten cities shows the type of analysis which can be made about weapons and crime by using weapon information available at the department level. With this data, Brill is able to more fully analyze such questions as: What percent of the guns used to commit crimes are stolen? What type of gun is used in robbery, assaults, and other felonies? What is the age of firearms used by criminals? Brill argues that the policies developed to curb firearm abuse in American society must be informed by the data on weapons and crime. He finds that the necessary information to answer these questions is in the local police departments:

"Police are...the keepers of the arrest, incident and property confiscation records that tell the only detailed story of the role of firearms in crime in America. Yet the information contained in these records has never been gathered in a systematic analysis of the firearm problem."
(Ibid., p. 5)

Current Report Summaries on Firearms and Crime

Local law enforcement agencies currently report monthly and annual summaries about crimes and arrests to the Uniform Crime Report section of the FBI. Many local departments prepare these reports themselves and

retain copies for their own use and planning. Other departments forward monthly data to a state level agency which compiles the UCR reports for them. These reports ask for weapon information in only a limited number of areas.

The reports on offenses known to the police include three categories of crime with a breakdown by type of weapon; homicide, robbery and assault. The report on reported robberies and assaults includes only the type of weapon (firearm, knife, other weapon, or hands, fists, feet, etc.). There is no information on type of weapon, so it is not possible (from these UCR reports) to determine, for example, the number of robberies with handguns. The supplemental report on homicides does request that the police specify the type of firearm involved (handgun, shotgun, etc.); however, there is no further information about the firearm (i.e., caliber, value, age, illegal possession, etc.). The report on the number of reported rapes includes no weapon information at all.

The UCR report on the number of arrests made by the police offers little more weapon information. There is one category of arrest for all weapons crimes, "Weapons; carrying, possessing, etc." This single category does not necessarily offer information about weapons used to commit crimes. Persons who are arrested on multiple charges (i.e., robbery with a stolen gun) are counted in the UCR report in the highest crime category (in this case robbery). Thus, this weapons category does not necessarily reflect the number of persons arrested on gun charges or with possession of a weapon.

The last area within the UCR reports which deals with firearms is in the stolen property report which requests the total value of stolen

and recovered firearms (not the number stolen and recovered). Only by making some tenuous assumptions about the average value of a gun could a count of firearms stolen and recovered by the police be derived.¹

Thus, the current national level information available in the form of the UCR reports provides only a very limited amount of information about weapons and crime. Certainly, this data cannot be used to fully analyze or evaluate policies about weapons and crimes due to the limited amount of specific weapon information available.

Local Department Summaries Currently Prepared

In addition to the weapon information required for the UCR summary reports, what additional report summaries are currently being prepared by local departments on weapons-related topics? Table 6-1 presents the percentage of local departments that currently prepare annual aggregate summaries on such topics as weapons used in crime, number of stolen and confiscated weapons, etc. Close to half of the local departments currently prepare reports on the general area of weapons and crime; 54% prepare a summary report on the annual number of arrests for illegal possession of a firearm or carrying a firearm, 46% report on the annual number of crimes in which firearms were used and 45% report on the annual number of crimes by types of weapon. A slightly smaller percent of the local departments (33%) prepare a report which shows the proportion of each major type of crime by whether a weapon was present.²

¹Brill's analysis shows that the value of confiscated firearms is higher than typically expected (1977, p. 49).

²There may be some variation in the interpretation of these four weapons and crime report topics. Some respondents may have been thinking of UCR reports. For example, all departments should report the annual number of arrests for illegal possession of a weapon; however, UCR does not require a report of the number of all crimes committed with a weapon.

Table 6-1

Annual Summaries Prepared by Local Departments

<u>Summary Report Prepared on:</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>N</u>
Annual Number of Arrests for Illegal Possession or Carrying of Firearms	54.3%	45.7	(437)
Annual Number of Crimes in which Firearms were used (Except Illegal Possession or Carrying)	45.9%	54.1	(435)
Annual Number of Crimes by Each Type of Weapon (Knives, Handguns, Long Guns, etc.)	45.2	54.8	(437)
Proportion of each Major Type of Crime by Whether a Weapon was Present	33.0%	67.0	(435)
Annual Number of Firearms Reported Stolen	40.0%	60.0	(426)
Annual Number of Firearms Confiscated	29.6%	70.4	(436)
Annual Number of Times ATF Trace System was Used	8.6%	91.4	(425)
Number and Types of Weapons Owned by the Department and Purchased over the Year	47.5%	52.5	(430)

Forty percent of the local departments prepare an annual report on the number of firearms reported stolen. A smaller percent (29.6%) currently report on the number of firearms confiscated. Close to half of the local departments currently prepare an annual report of the weapons stock and the number of weapons purchased annually by their own department. Few local departments summarize their annual uses of the ATF weapons tracing system.

The number of departments that currently prepare annual reports on weapons-related topics is not large -- particularly in the areas which are not currently required for the Uniform Crime Reports. The distribution of report preparation by size of department (see Table 6-2) shows that the largest local departments (500 or more sworn officers) are slightly more likely to produce these annual report summaries than are the medium-sized departments. For example, 40.7% of the largest departments prepare an annual report on the number of stolen weapons, while 33.2% of the departments with 90 to 499 officers and 37.8% of the departments with 40-89 officers prepare this report. The largest difference in percentages by size of department is found in the percent of departments that produce a report on the proportion of major crimes by whether a weapon was present; 19.6% of the medium-sized departments while 35.7% of the largest departments produce this report. Although there is some variation by size of department, overall, less than half of the largest departments report the preparation of these annual summaries on weapons and crime topics.

The questionnaire asked the local departments that did not prepare an annual summary on a specific topic to rate the ease of preparing an

Table 6-2

Percent of Local Departments that Prepare Annual Summary Reports by Size of Department

Annual Summary Report Prepared	Total	Size of Department ^a				
		1-9	10-39	40-89	90-499	500 +
Number of Arrests for Illegal Possession of Firearms	54.3% (437)	37.5% (12)	62.8% (54)	47.8% (45)	48.9% (108)	57.1% (218)
Number of Crimes in which Firearms Used	45.9% (435)	37.5% (12)	60.0% (53)	47.8% (45)	38.1% (108)	46.4% (218)
Number of Crimes by Each Type of Weapon	45.2% (437)	37.5% (12)	49.0% (54)	47.8% (45)	37.0% (108)	48.2% (218)
Proportion of Each Major Type of Crime by Whether Weapon was Present	33.0% (435)	42.9% (10)	47.1% (54)	19.6% (45)	25.1% (108)	35.7% (218)
Number of Firearms Reported Stolen	40.0% (426)	14.3% (10)	56.9% (54)	37.8% (44)	33.2% (107)	40.7% (211)
Number of Firearms Confiscated	29.6% (436)	37.5% (12)	37.2% (54)	21.7% (45)	26.8% (107)	30.4% (218)
Number of Times ATF Trace System Used	8.6% (425)	12.5% (12)	11.8% (54)	9.1% (43)	8.8% (105)	7.4% (211)
Number of Weapons Owned and Purchased by the Department	47.5% (430)	37.5% (12)	52.9% (54)	51.1% (44)	48.4% (106)	45.4% (214)

N's is () are base numbers for the percent calculation for that cell.

^aNumber of sworn officers from LEAA data file.

annual report on that topic. These results are presented in Table 6-3. Overall, the departments tend to rate the ease of the preparation of annual summaries as neither very difficult nor very easy. A summary report of the numbers of weapons owned and purchased by the department would be the easiest report for local departments to prepare (a mean rating of ease of 3.8³). Summary reports of the number and proportion of crimes by type of weapon are rated as the most difficult to prepare (both are given the lowest mean rating of ease of 2.7).

The variation in the rating of ease of report preparation by size of department (Table 6-3) is not large. However, of the departments which do not currently prepare an annual summary on a specific topic, the largest departments tend to rate the preparation of such a report as more difficult than do the smaller departments. For example, the largest departments rate the ease of reporting the annual number of firearms confiscated as 2.7 while departments in the two medium-size categories (40 to 89 officers and 90 to 499 officers) give higher ease ratings of 3.2 and 2.9 to this report. The largest departments' rating of these reports as slightly more difficult to prepare is probably related to the greater amount of weapons-related crime and incidents which they encounter.

Although a majority of local departments report that they do not currently prepare annual summaries on the weapons-related topics we presented in our questionnaire, and they do not rate the preparation of these reports as "very easy," there are a number of departments that are

³This ease scale is coded from 1 = very difficult to 5 = very easy.

Table 6-3

Ease^a of Summary Report Preparation for Departments
That do not Currently Prepare Reports
By Size of Department

	Total	Size of Department ^b				
		1-9	10-39	40-89	90-499	500 +
Number of Arrests for Illegal Possession of Firearms	3.0 (177)	3.2 (6)	3.2 (18)	3.3 (23)	3.1 (49)	2.8 (82)
Number of Crimes in which Firearms Used	2.9 (208)	3.2 (7)	3.4 (18)	3.2 (23)	2.9 (59)	2.7 (101)
Number of Crimes by Each Type of Weapon	2.7 (213)	2.8 (6)	2.8 (25)	3.2 (22)	2.8 (58)	2.5 (101)
Proportion of Each Major Type of Crime by Whether Weapon was Present	2.7 (255)	3.5 (6)	3.0 (25)	2.9 (33)	2.7 (70)	2.5 (121)
Number of Firearms Reported Stolen	3.0 (229)	3.0 (9)	3.5 (20)	3.5 (23)	3.1 (63)	2.8 (113)
Number of Firearms Confiscated	3.0 (274)	3.2 (7)	3.6 (30)	3.3 (32)	3.1 (68)	2.7 (137)
Number of Times ATF Trace System Used	2.8 (310)	2.5 (9)	3.4 (36)	3.5 (34)	2.8 (79)	2.6 (152)
Number of Weapons Owned and Purchased by the Department	3.8 (191)	3.8 (7)	3.9 (18)	3.8 (20)	3.8 (45)	3.8 (101)

^a"How easy would this annual summary be to prepare?" 1 = very difficult to 5 = very easy.

^bNumber of sworn officers from LEAA data file.

currently preparing these summaries or that rate such preparation as fairly easy. This level of report summary preparation (especially for non-UCR required topics such as weapons confiscated and number of crimes by type of weapon) indicates that some departments are already preparing reports which provide more detailed weapons and crime information than found in the current UCR crime reports.

Level of Computerization

The use of computer technology within law enforcement agencies has been rapidly expanding during the last decade. One of the recommendations from the 1967 President's Commission of Law Enforcement was that law enforcement agencies should take advantage of the developing computerized technologies in their departmental work. This increase in computerization within local departments was aided in large part by federal funds from LEAA to acquire computers and the technology for routine applications (such as police, administration, crime and arrest reports, statistical files) and non-routine applications (such as resource allocation modeling, computer-aided dispatch, investigation of crime).⁴

Colton (1978) surveyed a sample of local departments in 1971 and 1974 to assess the level of computer use, anticipated use, and areas of computerization. In 1971, 44% of the local departments⁵ were using a

⁴ See Kent W. Colton, Police Computer Technology, 1978, for a complete discussion of computer revolution within law enforcement agencies.

⁵ Colton's 1974 survey included only local departments in jurisdictions with a population of 50,000 and over. The 1971 figure has been adjusted to exclude 75 departments in areas with smaller populations. (See Colton, 1978, Table 2-2, p. 21.)

computer for some areas of police work within their departments. In 1974, a second survey showed that 56% were using computers. Although the number of departments using computers in 1974 was lower than anticipated (the 1971 survey asked about future computer use and predicted that 68% of the departments would be using computers in 1974), the increasing trend is clear.

The level of computer use by local departments in our survey is shown in Table 6-4. Over three-quarters (76.3%) of the local departments report that some or all of the departmental records are computerized (this figure excludes use of an NCIC computer terminal). Colton's 1974 survey of departments asked about future expected computer use and found that the anticipated level of computer use by law enforcement agencies in 1977 was expected to be 74% (for departments in cities with 50,000 or more population). Our results are in line with this estimate, allowing for an over-estimation of expected use in 1977 and allowing for the inclusion of small departments in our 76% level of use. (See Table 6-5 below for variation in computer use by size of department.)

Panel B of Table 6-4 shows the types of computer application used by local departments. All of these uses are considered to be routine in Colton's conception of the use of the computer. However, for the purposes of this analysis, these areas do indicate the level of computerization of the type of data which may contain weapon information. Of the local departments that use computers, a large majority have computerized their arrest reports (82.4%) and crime reports (83.6%). The computerization of outstanding warrants is also very high (88.6% of the departments with computers report this area of use). These results give some indication

Table 6-4

Computer Use by Local Departments

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>N</u>					
A: <u>Department Records Computerized</u>	76.3%	23.7	(441)					
B: <u>Type of Information Computerized</u>								
Arrest Records	82.4%	17.6	(336)					
Reported Crimes	83.6%	16.4	(336)					
Dispatch Calls for Police	70.9%	29.1	(336)					
Parking Violations	58.3%	41.7	(336)					
Traffic Violations	70.7%	29.3	(336)					
Outstanding Warrants	88.6%	11.4	(336)					
C: <u>Type of Computer Installation</u> ^a								
Separate Police Department Installation	40.9%	59.1	(331)					
Shared System with Other Agency	84.1%	15.9	(334)					
D: <u>Rating of Experience with Computers</u>								
	Invaluable All Trouble					(NA)	<u>N</u>
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	
	34.6%	29.2	15.9	15.4	2.8	.6	.3	1.2 (328)
Mean Rating of Experience =	2.24							

^aDepartments may have both a separate and shared computer system.

of the technological capability of local departments to prepare more detailed reports about weapons and crime.

Most local departments (84.1%) report a shared system with another agency; however, 40 percent of the departments report that they have a separate police installation (see Panel C of Table 6-4).

The police respondents in our survey rate their experiences with the use of computers as very favorable (Panel D of Table 6-4). Few department respondents rate their experiences as "all trouble," with the majority reporting their experiences as "invaluable" (the two most favorable ratings combined). On the average, they rate their experience with computers as 2.24 (on a scale of 1 = invaluable to 7 = all trouble).

As Colton found in his surveys of police departmental computer use, the size of the department is related to computer use. Almost all of the largest departments in our survey (96.6%) report computer use (see Table 6-5). The largest departments also have higher levels of computerization of arrest records and crime reports. For example, 91.1% of the largest departments with computers have computerized their arrest records, while only 60% of the departments with 40 to 89 officers have done so. The largest departments are slightly more likely to have their own computer installation (42.9%) than are the smaller departments, although this difference by size is not very large. There is also not much difference in the reported experiences with computers by department size; the local departments that use computers give favorable ratings to their experiences within all department size categories.

Colton's 1971 and 1974 surveys also found regional differences in the levels of computerization by the police, with the departments in the

Table 6-5

Computer Use^a by Size of Department

	Size of Department ^b				
	1-9	10-39	40-89	90-499	500 +
A: Department Records Computerized	50.0% (12)	30.0% (53)	34.1% (43)	76.1% (107)	96.6% (226)
B: <u>Type of Information Computerized</u>					
Arrest Records	25.0%	66.7%	60.0%	70.5%	91.1%
Reported Crimes	50.0%	66.7%	66.7%	77.1%	89.3%
Dispatch Calls for Police	0.0%	33.3%	40.0%	63.3%	80.4%
Parking Violations	0.0%	33.3%	33.3%	41.4%	69.6%
Traffic Violations	0.0%	60.0%	73.3%	51.4%	80.4%
Outstanding Warrants	50.0%	73.3%	80.0%	74.6%	96.4%
N =	(6)	(16)	(15)	(81)	(218)
C: <u>Type of Computer Installation</u>					
Separate Computer System	0.0%	35.7%	38.5%	40.0%	42.9%
Shared System	100.0%	85.7%	86.7%	77.9%	85.7%
N =	(6)	(16)	(15)	(81)	(218)
D: <u>Average Experience with Computers</u>					
Mean Rating ^c	1.8 (6)	2.2 (14)	1.8 (15)	2.5 (79)	2.2 (214)

^aPercentages shown for those departments that responded "Yes".

^bNumber of sworn officers from LEAA data file.

^c1 = invaluable to 7 = all trouble. See Table 6-4.

South and the West having the highest level of computer use. Our survey results show a similar pattern by region (see Table 6-6). In particular, the departments from the Northeast are least likely to have computerized records (only 46.4% of the departments in this region have a computer).⁶

However, the uses of the computer by departments that have computers do not show large differences. In particular, the level of computerization of the arrest records and reported crimes is high within all regions, with over 75% of the departments reporting this area of use.

The distribution of type of system (shared and separate installation) by region shows that of the departments that have a computer, local departments in the Northeast are most likely to have their own installation. Again, the rating of the department's experience with the computer is equally favorable in all regions.

Colton's analysis of the use of computers by law enforcement agencies concludes that the impact of computer technology has been disappointing in the areas of non-routine use; that is, that local departments have not taken advantage of the full range of computer and scientific innovations in all areas of police work. However, our survey shows that the use of computers for the areas that are related to report generation capability is quite high; a large number of departments have computerized their individual case reports from which summary reports about weapons and crime could be generated.

⁶This lower percentage of computer use by departments in the Northeast may be somewhat related to the smaller size of local departments in this region (see Table 2-5 in Chapter 2).

Table 6-6

Computer Use^a by Region

	<u>West</u>	<u>North East</u>	<u>North Central</u>	<u>South</u>
A: Department Records Computerized?	91.9% (89)	46.4% (117)	81.6% (106)	88.0% (129)
B: <u>Type of Information Computerized</u>				
Arrest Records	78.7%	76.2%	81.6%	88.7%
Reported Crimes	84.3%	81.0%	79.0%	87.8%
Dispatch Call for Police	67.1%	56.1%	70.3%	81.1%
Parking Violations	54.0%	51.4%	57.2%	65.5%
Traffic Violations	72.1%	52.0%	75.4%	75.1%
Outstanding Warrants	96.2%	69.7%	86.3%	93.8%
N =	(82)	(54)	(87)	(114)
C: <u>Type of Computer Installation</u>				
Separate Department Computer	49.9%	55.0%	27.3%	38.4%
Shared System	91.4%	61.1%	87.8%	87.0%
N =	(82)	(54)	(87)	(114)
D: <u>Average Experience with Computers</u>				
Mean Rating ^b	2.2 (77)	2.3 (52)	2.3 (85)	2.2 (114)

^aPercentages shown for those departments that responded "Yes".

^b1 = invaluable to 7 = all trouble. See Table 6-4.

Attitudes Toward Current Report Summary Requirements

The perceptions of the amount of trouble that is involved in the report summaries that are currently produced by the local police departments is shown in Table 6-7. We asked that police respondents rate the amount of trouble that is caused by report requirements in three areas: personnel time, amount of detail required on the standard report forms and equipment costs. The burden on equipment costs is rated as the least troublesome (with a mean rating of 2.7 on a scale from 6 = very burdensome to 1 = no trouble at all). The amount of burden on personnel time and standard report form detail is about equal with mean ratings of 3.4 and 3.3. Although some local departments report that personnel time and standard report form detail are caused by current report requirements, an equal number (or more) report no trouble at all caused by their current reports. Few local departments report that a burden is placed on equipment costs by summary reporting.

The average amount of trouble caused by summary reports does not vary much by the size of the department (see Panel D of Table 6-7). The largest departments tend to give a lower average rating to the areas of personnel time and report form detail involved in report summary preparation than do the departments with 90 to 499 officers (3.2 vs. 3.7 and 3.2 vs. 3.5).

The regression equation of the average amount of trouble caused by report summary preparation by local departments on department characteristics shows that region, type of department, number of weapons regulations done by the local police, perception of the weapons and crime problem and good report forms are not significantly related to the

Table 6-7

Amount of Burden Caused by Current Summary
Report Requirements

A: Summary Reports are a Drain on Personnel Time

VERY BURDENSOME	(6)	11.9%
	(5)	17.1
	(4)	16.1
	(3)	24.2
	(2)	15.1
NO TROUBLE AT ALL	(1)	15.1
N =		(434)

B: Summary Reports Require Details on Case Report Forms

VERY BURDENSOME	(6)	9.8%
	(5)	15.0
	(4)	17.0
	(3)	25.5
	(2)	17.3
NO TROUBLE AT ALL	(1)	15.4
N =		(416)

C: Summary Reports Burdensome on Equipment Costs

VERY BURDENSOME	(6)	5.1%
	(5)	6.4
	(4)	12.2
	(3)	29.5
	(2)	23.7
NO TROUBLE AT ALL	(1)	23.2
N =		(412)

Table 6-7 (continued)

D: Average Trouble Caused by Report Summaries

	Total	Department Size ^b				
		1-9	10-39	40-89	90-499	500+
Drain on Personnel	3.4 (434)	3.4 (12)	3.5 (54)	3.5 (46)	3.7 (108)	3.2 (214)
Details Required on Forms	3.3 (416)	3.0 (9)	3.5 (49)	3.2 (43)	3.5 (101)	3.2 (214)
Burden on Equipment Costs	2.7 (412)	2.4 (7)	2.5 (49)	2.1 (41)	2.8 (101)	2.8 (214)
Average Trouble ^a	3.1 (411)	3.1 (7)	3.2 (49)	3.0 (41)	3.3 (100)	3.1 (214)

^aAverage trouble rating scale of three ratings above. 1 = no trouble to 6 = very burdensome.

^bNumber of sworn officers from LEAA data file.

Table 6-8

Regression of Trouble^a Caused by Summary Report
Preparation on Department Characteristics

	Dependent Variable is: Average Trouble Rating ^a	
	<u>b</u>	<u>SE</u>
Separate Computer Installation ^b	-.44*	.18
Good Forms ^c	.10	.20
Ratio of Additional Personnel to Sworn Officers	.04	.32
Number of Weapons Regulations Done ^d	-.03	.03
Perceptions of Weapons and Crime Problem ^e	.13	.12
Computerized Arrest Records or Reported Crimes ^f	.38	.30
Municipal Police Department ^g	.19	.19
<u>Region</u> ^h		
West	.22	.23
Northeast	-.04	.25
North Central	.42	.22
CONSTANT	2.38 ***	.47

$R^2 = .06$

N = 304

* indicates statistical significance at .05.
*** indicates statistical significance at .001.

Table 6-8 (continued)

^a Average trouble index where 1= no burden at all to 6 = very burdensome. Average rating of 3 items shown in Table 6-6.

^b Dummy variable 1 = yes. Omitted category is no computer or shared system.

^c Standard property and incident report forms request details on weapons involved.

^d Number of weapons regulations done by the department. The range is 1 to 15 (see Chapter 3, Table 3-1).

^e Average of perceived problems of weapons and crime and illegal firearms traffic. 1= no problem to 5 = very serious problem.

^f Dummy variable 1 = yes computerized arrest records or reported crimes.

^g Omitted category is "Sheriff and County Police."

^h U.S. Census Bureau region definition. Omitted category is "South".

department's perception of the amount of trouble caused by current summary report requirements. The only variable which significantly decreases the trouble rating is a separate computer installation within the department. Those departments with their own computer installation tend, on the average, to give a lower rating to the amount of trouble caused by report preparation. This effect is not surprising; local departments that have a separate computer probably have a greater investment in computer software and personnel to prepare such summary reports. It is not possible from our survey to determine whether local departments acquired their own computer installation in part to produce the required summary reports or that local departments with their own computer have a tendency to do more work (that is, the computer system must be justified in its use).

Changes Necessary for Additional Summary Reporting

We asked the respondents in the local police departments to specify the amount of change which would be necessary within their department in order to produce additional summary information on weapons-related topics. These changes involve the department's record-keeping systems and general weapons procedures. Table 6-9 shows that only 17.8% of the local departments respond that no changes would be necessary. A third of the local departments report that some slight changes would be necessary, while twenty percent say that major changes would be necessary to provide additional weapons information. The distribution of these responses by size of departments shows that the largest departments (500 or more officers) have a higher percent reporting no necessary changes; 20.4% vs. 13.7% of the departments with 90 to 499 officers state

Table 6-9

Changes Required to Prepare Additional Report Summarized by Size of Department

<u>Changes Necessary</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Department Size^a</u>				
		<u>1-9</u>	<u>10-39</u>	<u>40-89</u>	<u>90-499</u>	<u>500</u>
No Change	17.8%	12.5%	20.5%	12.5%	13.7%	20.4%
Slight Change	33.7	25.0	47.7	35.0	32.1	31.5
Major Change	21.1	37.5	11.4	10.0	30.1	20.4
Some Change ^b	27.4	25.0	20.5	42.5	24.1	27.8
N =	(404)	(12)	(47)	(39)	(96)	(211)
<u>Specific Change^c</u>						
New Forms	84.4% (330)	100% (9)	88.6% (37)	97.1% (33)	86.4% (83)	79.1% (168)
Additional Personnel	45.8% (328)	66.7% (9)	23.5% (36)	41.2% (33)	49.1% (83)	48.8% (168)
Additional Funds	62.5% (330)	83.3% (9)	42.9% (37)	50.0% (33)	64.0% (83)	67.4% (168)
Special Training	63.4% (325)	50.0% (9)	36.4% (35)	61.8% (33)	73.7% (81)	65.1% (168)

^aNumber of sworn officers from LEAA data file.

N in ()'s are base N's for percent calculations.

^bOne of the changes below was specified, but this question was not answered.

^cPercentages are departments that specified this change.

that no change of the department's procedures would be necessary to prepare additional summary reports.

The amount of change necessary does vary by region (see Table 6-10). The local departments in the West are least likely to report that no changes would be necessary within their departments (only 9.4% of the departments from the West); while 26.6% of the departments from the South report no changes necessary. The departments from the Northeast and North Central regions are also more likely to report that some level of change would be required to produce additional summary reports.

The bottom panels of Tables 6-9 and 6-10 detail the types of changes specified by the local departments that report that change would be necessary. The largest number of departments (84.4%) respond that there would have to be changes made on their standard report forms. These changes would presumably include additional details on weapons involved (i.e., type of firearm, value, age, etc. see Chapter 5 above) and changes in any coding or categories which are currently on the standard report form. Our analysis of the standard police report forms found that the majority of local departments use forms which at least have a special area or space where weapon information can be recorded. The response of the local departments that changes would be necessary on their report forms indicates that most departments realize that these changes would be necessary to perhaps facilitate the recording and retrieval of all weapon information.

A majority of the local departments that responded that changes would be necessary specified that additional funds would have to be sought and that special training of personnel would be required to prepare additional

Table 6-10

Changes Required to Prepare Additional Report
Summarized by Region

<u>Changes Necessary</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>West</u>	<u>North East</u>	<u>North Central</u>	<u>South</u>
No Change	17.8%	9.4%	16.7%	14.1%	26.6%
Slight Change	33.7	43.0	36.8	35.4	24.0
Major Change	21.1	28.1	19.6	25.4	14.9
Some Change ^b	27.4	19.5	26.8	25.0	34.6
N =	(404)	(82)	(103)	(90)	(129)
<u>Specific Change^a</u>					
New Forms	84.4% (330)	84.9% (75)	95.2% (83)	71.3% (77)	85.0% (95)
Additional Personnel	45.8% (328)	55.5% (74)	41.6% (83)	43.7% (77)	43.8% (95)
Additional Funds	62.5% (330)	76.8% (75)	58.5% (83)	54.0% (77)	61.5% (95)
Special Training	63.4% (325)	64.5% (73)	59.1% (81)	69.1% (77)	61.7% (95)

^aPercentages are regions that specified this change.

N in ()'s are base N's for percent calculations.

^bOne of the changes below was specified, but this question was not answered.

summary reports on weapons-related topics. Close to half of the local departments also report that additional personnel would have to be added.

The variation in the types of changes specified by departments across size of department and region is not large. The largest local police departments are less likely to require new report forms or any special training of personnel than are the smaller departments, but a large majority of the departments in this category report that these changes would be necessary. The local departments in the West are the most likely to have to seek additional funds (76.8%); while the local departments in the Northeast are the most likely to have to make changes in their report forms or add new forms.

Despite the differences that do exist by size of department and region, there are many departments that would require changes in order to produce additional weapon information.

Overall Willingness to Prepare Weapons and Crime Summaries

In spite of the changes that local departments specify would be necessary in order to produce further report summaries, local departments do not appear to be completely hostile to the requests for more weapon information. The distribution of the willingness of the departments to provide additional summary reports is shown in Table 6-11. Only 6% of the respondents in the local departments say that there would be "much resentment" about the additional burdens imposed upon their department by additional report requests. However, there are also not many more local departments that would be eager to cooperate (only 12.2% of the

Table 6-11

Willingness of Local Departments to Provide Additional Summary Weapon Information

A: Willingness to Provide Additional Summary Information

MUCH RESENTMENT	(1)	6.7%
	(2)	11.8
	(3)	15.1
	(4)	35.0
	(5)	12.0
	(6)	7.2
EAGER TO COOPERATE	(7)	12.2
	N =	(431)
	Mean willingness rating	4.0

B: Average Willingness Rating by Size of Department^a

<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>1-9</u>	<u>10-39</u>	<u>40-89</u>	<u>90-499</u>	<u>500+</u>
4.0	3.8	4.0	4.1	3.8	4.2
(431)	(12)	(51)	(42)	(104)	(222)

C: Average Willingness Rating by Region^b

<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>West</u>	<u>North East</u>	<u>North Central</u>	<u>South</u>
4.0	3.5	4.5	4.0	4.0
(431)	(88)	(109)	(104)	(130)

^aNumber of Sworn Officers according to LEAA data file.

^bU.S. Census Bureau definition.

local departments respond with this very willing rating).

The largest number of departments respond neutrally to the question about future report requests; the average willingness rating is 4.0 (on a scale from 1 = much resentment to 7 = eager to cooperate). The distribution of the average willingness to produce additional summary reports by department size shows that the largest departments are only slightly more willing than are the medium sized departments (90 to 499 officers) to produce more summary reports. Panel C of Table 6-11 shows that the departments in the Northeast are most willing to cooperate with further report requests; while the departments in the West are least willing. However, the differences here are not large.

The regression analysis in Table 6-12 of willingness to prepare additional weapon information summary reports indicates that the local departments that are involved and concerned about weapons issues, and have the personnel and technical support, are the most willing to comply with future report requests. Specifically, those departments with their own, separate computer installation and with a higher ratio of additional support and staff personnel to uniformed officers are significantly more willing to prepare reports, regardless of other characteristics in the equation. The amount of involvement in the regulation of weapons by local departments is also positively related to willingness; as is the perceived seriousness of the problem of weapons and crime. Municipal police departments and those departments who report more trouble with current report summary requirements are less willing, on the average, to prepare additional reports. As seen in an earlier table, local departments from the West are significantly less willing

Table 6-11

Regression of Willingness of Local Departments
to Prepare Additional Summary Reports

	Dependent Variable is: Willingness to Prepare Reports ^a	
	b	SE
Separate Computer Installation ^b	.67***	.19
Good Forms ^c	.34	.21
Ratio of Additional Personnel to Sworn Officers	.66*	.32
Number of Weapons Regulations Done ^d	.06*	.03
Current Report Writing Burdens ^e	-.39***	.06
Perception of Weapons and Crime Problem ^f	.28*	.12
Municipal Police Department ^g	-.54**	.19
<u>Region</u> ^h		
West	-.71**	.24
Northeast	.61*	.26
North Central	.39	.23
CONSTANT	4.16**	.40
	R ² = .25	
	N = 353	

* indicates statistical significance at .05.
 ** indicates statistical significance at .01.
 *** indicates statistical significance at .001.

Table 6-11 (continued)

^aScale 1 = much resentment to 7 = eager to cooperate.

^bDummy variable 1 = yes.

^cStandard property and incident report forms request details on weapons involved.

^dNumber of weapons regulations done by department. 1 to 15 (see Chapter 3).

^eSee Table 6-7.

^fAverage of perceived problem of weapons and crime and illegal firearms traffic. 1 = no problem to 5 = very

^gOmitted category is "Sheriff and County Police."

^hU.S. Census Bureau definition. Omitted category is "South."

to prepare additional reports than are the police departments in the South, net of all other department characteristics and attitudes. The size of the department is not included in this equation due to multicollinearity problems; however, the earlier analysis shows that size of department is related to increased number of weapon regulations and a more serious rating of the weapons and crime problem.

Thus, it appears that there are local departments willing to provide additional weapon summary information, but probably not without some incentive and support. This is shown particularly in the areas of use of a computer, particularly a separate department installation, which the department can control and utilize with its own personnel. It should be noted that the details on weapons currently on the department's standard report forms does not significantly affect the department's willingness to produce additional summary reports. The ratio of additional support staff to uniformed officers is another area where the departments noted that changes would have to be made in order to comply with additional summary information about weapons.

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Weapons Policies

A Survey of Police Department Practices
Concerning Weapons and Related Issues



Conducted by
Social and Demographic Research Institute
University of Massachusetts
Amherst, MA 01003

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1980

... ABOUT THIS SURVEY

This survey is concerned with finding out:

- ... *Responsibilities and practices* of your department for enforcing state and local regulations concerning firearms
- ... Your department's practices about *recording* data on weapons encountered in police work
- ... Departmental *usage* of national weapons tracing systems (NCIC, ATF)
- ... Departmental *experiences* with crimes in which firearms were involved
- ... Special issues, problems, and needs of police departments in dealing with firearm crimes and firearms regulations

... HOW THIS SURVEY WILL BE USED

- ... To improve planning for data collection on criminal uses of firearms
- ... To improve police usage of national weapons tracing systems
- ... To document experiences of police departments with state and local firearms regulations
- ... To aid police departments by suggesting workable firearms data collection policies that will not burden departments

... ABOUT CONFIDENTIALITY

Data produced by this survey will be handled by merging your answers with those produced by comparable departments — of the same size and of the same region of the country.

NO INDIVIDUAL DEPARTMENT'S ANSWERS WILL BE IDENTIFIED TO ANY PERSON OR AGENCY. Your individual answers will only be seen by the research staff and then only for the purpose of adding your replies to the project data files.

... ABOUT REPORTS FROM THE SURVEY

Summary reports will be made available to the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration of the Department of Justice and to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, as well as to the general public.

Brief summaries will be sent to all cooperating police departments.

... HOW TO ANSWER THIS QUESTIONNAIRE

Most of the questions can be answered by circling a number that represents the response that is closest to what applies to your department.

Police departments are all different. Although we have tried to allow for answers that will fit the experiences and practices in each department, we know that for some, the replies we allow for will not fit local conditions exactly. PLEASE EXPLAIN OR ELABORATE YOUR ANSWER IN THE BLANK SPACES PROVIDED THROUGHOUT THE QUESTIONNAIRE, IF THE RESPONSES WE HAVE ALLOWED FOR DO NOT FIT THE EXPERIENCES OF YOUR DEPARTMENT PRECISELY.

... SOME DEFINITIONS

State and local laws vary in how firearms are defined, especially HANDGUNS and LONG GUNS. We want you to use the definitions that apply in your jurisdiction. (If there are special difficulties in using your local definitions, please make note of the problem in appropriate spaces on the questionnaire.)

* * * * *

If you have questions or problems completing this questionnaire, please do not hesitate to call us collect during our office hours (8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Eastern Time):

Social and Demographic Research Institute (413) 545-3418

SECTION I: YOUR DEPARTMENT'S FIREARMS REGULATION ACTIVITIES

Listed below are activities police departments sometimes perform in the regulation of firearms. In some places, these functions are required under state or local laws, but in others, departments simply have traditionally taken on these activities on their own.

For each function listed, please circle whether that particular type of regulation is required under the law and whether your department or some other agency performs that function.

Function	REQUIRED BY LAW AND DONE BY		NOT REQUIRED BY LAW BUT DONE BY		NOT DONE IN JURISDICTION	UN-SURE
	Your Dept.	Other Agency	Your Dept.	Other Agency		
Q-1						
(10) a. Issue licenses to firearms wholesalers.	5	4	3	2	1	8
(11) b. Issue licenses to firearms retailers.	5	4	3	2	1	8
(12) c. Conduct investigations of persons applying to become firearms retailers.	5	4	3	2	1	8
(13) d. Issue hunting licenses or permits.	5	4	3	2	1	8
(14) e. Issue licenses, permits or identification cards to purchase long guns.	5	4	3	2	1	8
(15) f. Issue licenses, permits or identification cards to purchase handguns.	5	4	3	2	1	8
(16) g. Issue licenses, permits, or identification cards to possess long guns.	5	4	3	2	1	8
(17) h. Issue licenses, permits, or identification cards to possess handguns.	5	4	3	2	1	8
(18) i. Issue licenses or permits to sell ammunition.	5	4	3	2	1	8
(19) j. Conduct investigations of persons applying for a license or permit to purchase or possess a firearm.	5	4	3	2	1	8
(20) k. Handle registration of long guns.	5	4	3	2	1	8
(21) l. Handle registration of handguns.	5	4	3	2	1	8
(22) m. Issue permits to carry firearms openly.	5	4	3	2	1	8
(23) n. Issue permits to carry concealed firearms.	5	4	3	2	1	8
(24) o. Conduct investigations of persons who have applied for a permit to carry a firearm.	5	4	3	2	1	8

CONTINUED

2 OF 3

Q-2 Does your department ever offer courses or training sessions in the use of firearms that private citizens can attend?

(25)	YES, REGULARLY	3
	YES, SOMETIMES	2
	NO, NEVER	1

(26-27) PLEASE ELABORATE AS YOU WISH ON YOUR DEPARTMENT'S ACTIVITIES AND PRACTICES IN THE FIREARMS AREA. (For example, other types of firearms regulation activities that are not included in the above list.)

Q-3 Are citizens and/or firearms retailers in your jurisdiction required by law to report *lost* or *stolen* firearms to the police or other local authority?
(PLEASE ANSWER SEPARATELY FOR RETAILERS AND PRIVATE CITIZENS.)

	RETAILERS	PRIVATE CITIZENS
(28-29) YES, FOR ALL FIREARMS	3	3
YES, FOR HANDGUNS ONLY	2	2
NO	1	1
UNSURE	8	8

Q-4 In some places it is very easy to *purchase a handgun legally*. In other places it is very difficult to do so *legally*. *Illegal purchases* of handguns may also be very difficult or very easy to make.

How difficult would it be for adults to purchase handguns in your jurisdiction?
(PLEASE ANSWER SEPARATELY FOR LEGAL PURCHASES AND ILLEGAL PURCHASES.)

	LEGAL PURCHASES	ILLEGAL PURCHASES
(30-31) EXTREMELY DIFFICULT TO PURCHASE A HANDGUN HERE	1	1
	2	2
	3	3
ABOUT AVERAGE	4	4
	5	5
	6	6
EXTREMELY EASY TO PURCHASE A HANDGUN HERE	7	7
UNSURE	8	8

SECTION II: DEPARTMENT ROUTINE RECORD-KEEPING PRACTICES

These questions concern the kinds of information your department would usually keep in its records on the firearms that are used in committing crimes.

Each of the questions pose brief descriptions of typical situations in which firearms are involved. Some of the situations are relatively common, and others are infrequent.

For each situation, we want to know what information about the firearms involved would be typically obtained by your department and can be found in the records about such cases.

CIRCLE WHAT YOU THINK WOULD BE TYPICALLY OBTAINED IN EACH CASE.

"ACTUALLY RECORDED" means that the item of information asked about *usually* would appear somewhere on the records for cases of that sort.

"SOUGHT BUT NOT RECORDED" means that the item of information is one that would probably be sought for in the investigation, but that it would not usually appear in the records.

"NEITHER" means that the item of information is something that your department would not be concerned to ascertain or to record.

Situation #1: Found Weapon

A citizen calls the police department to report that she has found a firearm on a vacant lot near her residence. A patrolman is sent out to recover the firearm.

	ACTUALLY RECORDED	SOUGHT BUT NOT RECORDED	NEITHER
(32) a. Type of firearm (rifle, handgun, shotgun, etc.).	3	2	1
(33) b. Firearm serial number (if available).	3	2	1
(34) c. Manufacturer of the firearm.	3	2	1
(35) d. Whether the firearm was loaded.	3	2	1
(36) e. Whether the firearm had been recently fired.	3	2	1
(37) f. Approximate price or value of the firearm.	3	2	1
(38) g. Approximate age of the firearm.	3	2	1
(39) h. Caliber or barrel length of the firearm.	3	2	1

Q-5.2 Would an effort be made to determine whether the firearm had been reported as lost or stolen?

(40)	YES, DEFINITELY	4
	YES, PROBABLY	3
	NO, PROBABLY NOT	2
	NO, DEFINITELY NOT	1
	UNSURE	8

Q-5.3 Would an effort be made to determine the owner of the firearm (for example, by checking state or local permit or registration records or initiating an ATF trace)?

(41)	YES, DEFINITELY	4
	YES, PROBABLY	3
	NO, PROBABLY NOT	2
	NO, DEFINITELY NOT	1
	UNSURE	8

Situation #2: Stolen Weapon Reported by Owner

A citizen calls the department to report a burglary in which a firearm, along with other items, has been stolen. Officers are sent to investigate and make a report.

Q-6.1

In this situation, the following information would be	ACTUALLY RECORDED	SOUGHT BUT NOT RECORDED	NEITHER
(42) a. Type of firearm (rifle, handgun, shotgun, etc.).	3	2	1
(43) b. Firearm serial number (if available).	3	2	1
(44) c. Manufacturer of the firearm.	3	2	1
(45) d. Approximate price or value of the firearm.	3	2	1
(46) e. Approximate age of the firearm.	3	2	1
(47) f. Caliber or barrel length of the firearm.	3	2	1

Q-6.2

In the course of investigating this situation, would your department make an effort to determine whether the firearm was legally possessed by the person who reported it stolen?

(48) YES, DEFINITELY	4
YES, PROBABLY	3
NO, PROBABLY NOT	2
NO, DEFINITELY NOT	1
UNSURE	8

Q-6.3

Would your department enter the information about the stolen firearm on the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) system?

(49) YES	1
NO	2
UNSURE	8

Q-6.4

Is there a local or regional "stolen weapons" file (either in your city, county, or state) to which information about this firearm would be sent?

(50) YES	1
NO	2
UNSURE	8

Situation #3: Citizen Robbed at Gunpoint

A citizen reports that he has been robbed at gunpoint; his automobile and other personal valuables were stolen. Officers are sent to investigate.

Q-7.1

In this situation, the following information would be	ACTUALLY RECORDED	SOUGHT BUT NOT RECORDED	NEITHER
(51) a. Type of firearm (rifle, handgun, shotgun, etc.).	3	2	1
(52) b. Whether the firearm had been fired in the incident.	3	2	1

Q-7.2

In the course of the investigation of this situation, would the citizen who had been robbed be asked to provide a description of the *firearm*?

(53) YES, DEFINITELY	4
YES, PROBABLY	3
NO, PROBABLY NOT	2
NO, DEFINITELY NOT	1
UNSURE	8

Q-7.3

And would the citizen's description of the firearm then become part of the record or file on this case?

(54) YES	1
NO	2
UNSURE	8
INAPPLICABLE: NO DESCRIPTION OF THE FIREARM WOULD BE OBTAINED	0

Situation #4: Arrest of a Suspected Robber

A man is apprehended near the scene of a reported robbery who fits the description provided by the victim. The officer in charge finds a handgun on the suspect.

Q-8.1

In this situation, the following information would be	ACTUALLY RECORDED	SOUGHT BUT NOT RECORDED	NEITHER
(55) a. Handgun serial number (if available).	3	2	1
(56) b. Manufacturer of the handgun.	3	2	1
(57) c. Whether the handgun was loaded.	3	2	1
(58) d. Whether the handgun had been recently fired.	3	2	1
(59) e. Approximate price or value of the handgun.	3	2	1
(60) f. Approximate age of the handgun.	3	2	1
(61) g. Caliber or barrel length of the handgun.	3	2	1
(62) h. Whether the suspect had a prior record of firearms violations.	3	2	1

(Situation #4 continued)

Q-8.2		Would any effort be made to determine whether the handgun had been reported as lost or stolen?	
(63)	YES, DEFINITELY	4	
	YES, PROBABLY	3	
	NO, PROBABLY NOT	2	
	NO, DEFINITELY NOT	1	
	UNSURE	8	
Q-8.3		Would your department attempt to determine whether the handgun was legally possessed by the suspect?	
(64)	YES, DEFINITELY	4	
	YES, PROBABLY	3	
	NO, PROBABLY NOT	2	
	NO, DEFINITELY NOT	1	
	UNSURE	8	

Situation #5: Illegal Possession of a Handgun

A suspected drunken driver is pulled over by an officer. On the front seat is a handgun. A subsequent check reveals that the handgun was illegally possessed according to local jurisdictional regulations.

Q-9.1		In this situation, the following information would be			
		<u>ACTUALLY RECORDED</u>	<u>SOUGHT BUT NOT RECORDED</u>	<u>NEITHER</u>	
(65)	a. Handgun serial number (if available)	3	2	1	
(66)	b. Manufacturer of the handgun.	3	2	1	
(67)	c. Whether the handgun was loaded at the time.	3	2	1	
(68)	d. Whether the handgun had been recently fired.	3	2	1	
(69)	e. Approximate price or value of the handgun.	3	2	1	
(70)	f. Approximate age of the handgun.	3	2	1	
(71)	g. Caliber or barrel length of the handgun.	3	2	1	
(72)	h. Whether the offender had a prior record of firearms violations.	3	2	1	
Q-9.2		Would any effort be made to determine whether the handgun had been reported as lost or stolen?			
(73)	YES, DEFINITELY	4			
	YES, PROBABLY	3			
	NO, PROBABLY NOT	2			
	NO, DEFINITELY NOT	1			
	UNSURE	8			

Situation #6: Assault with a Firearm

A citizen calls the department to report that he has been assaulted by a neighbor and threatened with a gun. Officers are sent to investigate, and the neighbor is arrested and charged.

Q-10.1		In this situation, the following information would be			
	(CARD II)	<u>ACTUALLY RECORDED</u>	<u>SOUGHT BUT NOT RECORDED</u>	<u>NEITHER</u>	
(10)	a. Type of firearm (rifle, handgun, shotgun, etc.).	3	2	1	
(11)	b. Firearm serial number (if available).	3	2	1	
(12)	c. Manufacturer of the firearm.	3	2	1	
(13)	d. Whether the firearm was loaded at the time of the incident.	3	2	1	
(14)	e. Whether the firearm had been fired during the incident.	3	2	1	
(15)	f. Approximate price or value of the firearm.	3	2	1	
(16)	g. Approximate age of the firearm.	3	2	1	
(17)	h. Caliber or barrel length of the firearm.	3	2	1	
(18)	i. Whether the offender had a prior record of firearms offenses.	3	2	1	

Q-10.2 Would an effort be made to determine whether the firearm was legally possessed by the offender?

(19)	YES, DEFINITELY	4
	YES, PROBABLY	3
	NO, PROBABLY NOT	3
	NO, DEFINITELY NOT	1
	UNSURE	8

Q-10.3 Would any effort be made to find out whether the firearm had been reported as lost or stolen?

(20)	YES, DEFINITELY	4
	YES, PROBABLY	3
	NO, PROBABLY NOT	2
	NO, DEFINITELY NOT	1
	UNSURE	8

Situation #7: Reported Rape at Gunpoint

A citizen reports that she has been raped by an unknown assailant who threatened her with a gun. An officer is sent to investigate and makes a report.

Q-11.1		ACTUALLY RECORDED	SOUGHT BUT NOT RECORDED	NEITHER
(21)	a. Type of firearm (rifle, handgun, shotgun, etc.)	3	2	1
(22)	b. Whether the firearm had been fired in the incident.	3	2	1
Q-11.2		In the course of the investigation, would the citizen who had been raped be asked to provide a description of the <i>firearm</i> ?		
(23)	YES, DEFINITELY		4	
	YES, PROBABLY		3	
	NO, PROBABLY NOT		2	
	NO, DEFINITELY NOT		1	
	UNSURE		8	
Q-11.3		And would the citizen's description of the firearm then become part of the record or file on this case?		
(24)	YES		1	
	NO		2	
	UNSURE		8	
	INAPPLICABLE: NO DESCRIPTION OF THE FIREARM WOULD BE OBTAINED		0	

Situation #8: Accidental Gun Shot Incident

A citizen calls the department to report that he has been accidentally shot in the hand by a neighbor while being shown the neighbor's handgun collection. An officer is sent to investigate and makes a report. No arrest is made.

Q-12.1		ACTUALLY RECORDED	SOUGHT BUT NOT RECORDED	NEITHER
(25)	a. Type of firearm.	3	2	1
(26)	b. Firearm serial number (if available).	3	2	1
(27)	c. Manufacturer of the firearm.	3	2	1
(28)	d. Approximate price or value of the firearm.	3	2	1
(29)	e. Approximate age of the firearm.	3	2	1
(30)	f. Caliber or barrel length of the firearm.	3	2	1
Q-12.2		Would any effort be made to determine whether the firearm was legally possessed by the neighbor?		
(31)	YES, DEFINITELY		4	
	YES, PROBABLY		3	
	NO, PROBABLY NOT		2	
	NO, DEFINITELY NOT		1	
	UNSURE		8	

Situation #9: Illegal Taking of Game

A local farmer calls the department to report that he has heard gunshots in the woods adjacent to his property. An officer is sent to investigate and apprehends a man who has killed a deer out of season and without a hunting license.

Q-13.1		ACTUALLY RECORDED	SOUGHT BUT NOT RECORDED	NEITHER
(32)	a. Type of firearm.	3	2	1
(33)	b. Firearm serial number.	3	2	1
(34)	c. Manufacturer of the firearm.	3	2	1
(35)	d. Approximate age of the firearm.	3	2	1
(36)	e. Approximate price or value of the firearm.	3	2	1
(37)	f. Caliber or gauge of the firearm.	3	2	1
(38)	g. Whether the offender had a prior record of firearms offenses.	3	2	1
Q-13.2		Would an effort be made to determine whether the firearm had been reported as lost or stolen?		
(39)	YES, DEFINITELY		4	
	YES, PROBABLY		3	
	NO, PROBABLY NOT		2	
	NO, DEFINITELY NOT		1	
	UNSURE		8	
Q-13.3		Would any effort be made to determine whether the firearm was legally possessed by the offender?		
(40)	YES, DEFINITELY		4	
	YES, PROBABLY		3	
	NO, PROBABLY NOT		2	
	NO, DEFINITELY NOT		1	
	UNSURE		8	

Question 19 continued

	SUMMARIES PREPARED?		IF SUMMARIES ARE NOT PREPARED				
	YES	NO	VERY EASY	to	VERY DIFFICULT	
(64-65) a. Annual number of arrests for illegal possession or carrying of firearms	1	2	5	4	3	2	1
(66-67) b. Annual number of crimes in which firearms were used (except illegal possession or carrying)	1	2	5	4	3	2	1
(68-69) c. Annual number of firearms confiscated	1	2	5	4	3	2	1
(70-71) d. Annual number of firearms reported stolen	1	2	5	4	3	2	1
(72-73) e. Annual number of crimes by each type of weapon (knives, handguns, long guns, etc.)	1	2	5	4	3	2	1
(74-75) f. Proportions of each major type of crime by whether a weapon was present	1	2	5	4	3	2	1
(CARD III)							
(10-11) g. Annual number of times ATF weapons tracing system was used by department	1	2	5	4	3	2	1
(12-13) h. Number and types of weapons owned by the department and purchased over the year	1	2	5	4	3	2	1

IF YOUR DEPARTMENT PREPARES SUMMARY REPORTS IN ANY OF THESE AREAS, PLEASE ENCLOSE COPIES ALONG WITH THIS QUESTIONNAIRE.

Q-20 In your estimation, would it be necessary for your department to change its record-keeping practices and procedures in order to provide the summary information described in Q-19?

- (14) No changes would be necessary 1 → skip to Q-21
 Slight changes would be necessary 2
 Major changes would be necessary 3 } answer a to d below

Circle the kinds of changes that would be necessary.		Yes	No
(15)	a. New forms would have to be drawn up	1	2
(16)	b. Additional personnel would have to be added.	1	2
(17)	c. Additional funds would have to be sought in budget.	1	2
(18)	d. Special training of personnel would have to be undertaken.	1	2
(19)	e. Other (please elaborate)		

Q-21 And in general, how do you think the department would react to such requests: would the department be anxious and eager to cooperate, or would there be resentment about the additional paperwork and administrative burden?

- (20) EAGER TO COOPERATE.....7
 6
 5
 NEUTRAL.....4
 3
 2
 MUCH RESENTMENT.....1

SECTION III. DEPARTMENTAL USE OF NCIC SYSTEM AND ATF FIREARMS TRACE SERVICES

Both the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF) are sources that can be used to check on firearms used in crime. The following questions ask about your department's use of and experience with these NCIC and ATF services.

Q-22 First, does your department have direct access to the NCIC services through an interactive computer terminal that is owned or leased by your department?

- YES, WE HAVE DIRECT ACCESS 1
 NO, WE DO NOT HAVE DIRECT ACCESS 2

IF NO:
 Does your department have access to these services through a terminal in another nearby department or law enforcement agency?
 YES 1
 NO 2

Q-23 Does your department have a staff member (or members) who is (are) familiar with the use of a computer terminal?

- (23) YES 1
 NO 2
 UNSURE 8

Q-24 For firearms discovered in the course of an investigation and suspected of being implicated in a crime, how frequently would you say your department utilizes the NCIC system or ATF trace service about those firearms? (Assume that the necessary identifying information about the firearm is available.) (CIRCLE YOUR RESPONSE FOR BOTH NCIC AND ATF.)

	NCIC	ATF
EVERY FIREARM IS CHECKED	1	1
MOST FIREARMS ARE CHECKED	2	2
ONLY SOME FIREARMS ARE CHECKED	3	3
FIREARMS ARE VERY SELDOM CHECKED	4	4
FIREARMS ARE NEVER CHECKED	5	5

(SKIP TO QUESTION Q-29 IF YOUR DEPARTMENT USES NEITHER ATF NOR NCIC.)

(ANSWER Q-25 to Q-28 ONLY IF YOU USE NCIC OR ATF)

Q-25 For firearms that are found, confiscated, or recovered, how often are the NCIC system or ATF trace procedures used? (CIRCLE YOUR RESPONSE FOR BOTH NCIC AND ATF.)

	NCIC	ATF
EVERY FIREARM IS CHECKED	1	1
MOST FIREARMS ARE CHECKED	2	2
ONLY SOME FIREARMS ARE CHECKED	3	3
FIREARMS ARE VERY SELDOM CHECKED	4	4
FIREARMS ARE NEVER CHECKED	5	5

Q-26 Overall, how would you characterize your department's experiences with the NCIC system?

- (28) USUALLY USEFUL 4
 OFTEN USEFUL 3
 SELDOM USEFUL 2
 USELESS 1
 INAPPLICABLE (NEVER USED NCIC) 0

Q-27 And how about the ATF tracing service?

	USUALLY USEFUL	4
	OFTEN USEFUL	3
(29)	SELDOM USEFUL	2
	USELESS	1
	INAPPLICABLE (NEVER USED ATF)	0

ANSWER Q-28 ONLY IF YOU USE NCIC OR ATF

Q-28 Following are some of the problems police departments have sometimes had using the ATF service and NCIC system. In your department's experience, how serious have each of these problems been?
(PLEASE CIRCLE YOUR RESPONSE FOR BOTH NCIC AND ATF.)

a. Frequent delays in response.

	NCIC	ATF
(30-31)	4	4
	3	3
	2	2
	1	1
	0	0

b. Information obtained is not accurate.

	NCIC	ATF
(32-33)	4	4
	3	3
	2	2
	1	1
	0	0

c. Costs to the department of using the system are high.

	NCIC	ATF
(34-35)	4	4
	3	3
	2	2
	1	1
	0	0

d. Information obtained does not help the department to solve crimes.

	NCIC	ATF
(36-37)	4	4
	3	3
	2	2
	1	1
	0	0

SECTION IV. DEPARTMENTAL PROCEDURES FOR STORAGE AND DISPOSITION OF CONFISCATED FIREARMS

The following questions concern firearms that come into departmental possession in each of three ways:

- EVIDENCE IN A CASE:** Firearms that are taken because they may constitute physical evidence in a case.
- ILLEGALLY POSSESSED:** Firearms taken from individuals who were found to possess them illegally or to use them in illegal ways.
- FOUND FIREARMS:** Firearms discovered by the police or reported to them for which no owner is known.

For each of these three circumstances, indicate how your department handles firearms that come into its possession.

	EVIDENCE IN A CASE		ILLEGALLY POSSESSED		FOUND FIREARMS	
	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO
Q-29 (38-39) Is a receipt given to the person from whom the firearm is taken?	1	2	1	2	—	—
Q-30 (40-42) Does the firearm remain in the custody of the officer who recovered it?	1	2	1	2	1	2
Q-31 (43-45) Would the firearm be stored in a police property room?	1	2	1	2	1	2
Q-32 (46-48) Would the firearm be sold to a firearms dealer after some period of time?	1	2	1	2	1	2
Q-33 (49-51) Would the firearm be destroyed after some period of time?	1	2	1	2	1	2
Q-34 (52-54) Would the firearm be sold in a police property auction after some period of time?	1	2	1	2	1	2
Q-35 (55-57) Would it eventually be possible for the owner to reclaim the firearm?	1	2	1	2	1	2

(58-62) PLEASE USE THE SPACE BELOW TO ELABORATE AS YOU WISH ON YOUR DEPARTMENT'S PROCEDURES FOR DEALING WITH CONFISCATED FIREARMS.

SECTION V: DEPARTMENTAL COMPUTER USE

In the past decade, many police departments have begun to use computers for processing police records. The questions below ask about different kinds of computer usage in your department, EXCLUDING USE OF THE NCIC SYSTEM.

Q-36 Are any of your department's records (not counting payroll and purchasing) processed by computer?
 (63) NO COMPUTER USAGE (besides payroll and purchasing) 1 (S.I.P. to Q-40)
 SOME COMPUTER USAGE (excluding NCIC) 2 (ANSWER Q-37 to Q-39 BELOW)

Q-37 Which of the following records have been computerized?

	YES	NO
(64) a. Arrest records	1	2
(65) b. Reported crimes	1	2
(66) c. Dispatch calls for police	1	2
(67) d. Parking violations	1	2
(68) e. Traffic violations	1	2
(69) f. Outstanding warrants	1	2

Q-38 What is the computer equipment used by your department?

	YES	NO
(70) a. Separate police department installation	1	2
(71) b. Shared system with other agencies	1	2

Q-39 What has been your department's experience with computerization?

COMPUTERIZATION HAS BEEN INVALUABLE IN THE WORK OF THE DEPARTMENT	COMPUTERIZATION OFTEN SEEMS TO BE MORE TROUBLE THAN IT IS WORTH
1 2 3 4	5 6 7

(CARD IV)

Now, just a few more general questions about your department . . .

Q-40 Considering all the various crimes your department has to deal with in the course of its day-to-day activities, how big a problem would you say crimes committed with firearms are in your jurisdiction?

(10) VERY BIG PART OF OUR TOTAL PROBLEM	4
SUBSTANTIAL PART OF OUR TOTAL PROBLEM	3
NOT A SUBSTANTIAL PART OF OUR TOTAL PROBLEM	2
NOT REALLY A PROBLEM HERE AT ALL	1

Q-41 How big a problem to your department is illegal traffic in firearms (for example, circulation of stolen weapons, weapons thefts, black marketeering in illegal firearms, etc.)?

(11) VERY SERIOUS PROBLEM	4
SOMEWHAT SERIOUS PROBLEM	3
NOT TOO SERIOUS A PROBLEM	2
NO PROBLEM AT ALL	1

Q-42

In many states and local communities, the issue of regulations over gun ownership and sales has been controversial. In your memory have any of the following issues been a matter of controversy in your state and local community in 1978 or 1979? (PLEASE ANSWER FOR BOTH STATE AND LOCAL LEVELS.)

Issue	STATE		LOCAL	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
(12-13) a. Proposals for closer regulation of handgun sales	1	2	1	2
(14-15) b. Proposals for closer regulation of long gun sales	1	2	1	2
(16-17) c. Proposals for mandatory sentences for crimes committed with guns	1	2	1	2
(18-19) d. Proposals for closer regulation of handgun possession	1	2	1	2
(20-21) e. Proposals for closer regulation of long gun possession	1	2	1	2

Q-43

During the most recent complete fiscal year, what was the total number of persons employed in your police department? (Please write the numbers in the spaces provided.)

(22-27)

TOTAL NUMBER OF POLICE OFFICERS _____

(28-33)

TOTAL NUMBER OF ADDITIONAL SUPPORT PERSONNEL _____

Please fill in below the name, position, and phone number of the person who had primary responsibility for completing this questionnaire.

Name _____

Position _____

Phone No. _____

Most police departments have a package of standardized reporting forms that are routinely used to process an incident or case. IF YOUR DEPARTMENT USES STANDARDIZED REPORTING FORMS AND YOU HAVE COPIES AVAILABLE, PLEASE ENCLOSE THEM WITH THE COMPLETED QUESTIONNAIRE.

Please check the space provided if you would like to have a copy of the results of this survey sent to your department.

[] YES, PLEASE SEND A COPY OF THE SURVEY RESULTS TO:

MAIL THIS COMPLETED SURVEY FORM IN THE ENCLOSED POST-PAID ENVELOPE.

DO NOT FORGET TO INCLUDE:

- (1) Copies of your department's standard report forms (i.e., case report, arrest reports, etc.), if available.
- (2) Copies of summary information on crimes committed in your jurisdiction, in particular weapons- or firearms-related incidents.

The sample design, described in Chapter 2, draws a sample of local departments from the 299 sampled counties with probabilities proportionate to the proportion of the total police force within the size categories of police forces. That is, more large departments are sampled because they employ the largest proportion of the total police force. However, the actual sample drawn is not self-weighting because the sampling probabilities of the largest two size categories of police departments are identical (see Table 2-1) although they have different proportions of police. Part of Table 2-1 is reproduced below:

<u>Department Size</u>	<u>Number of Departments</u>	<u>Percent of Total Police in Size Class</u>	<u>Sample Proportion Used</u>
500 officers and over	79	50.4%	1.00
90-499	378	24.6	1.00

It was necessary to sample all departments in these two size categories to avoid a very small sample size; the total sample size would have been 157 departments ($79 * .504 = 157$) otherwise. However, because the largest 79 departments represent 50% of the police force and the larger category of 378 departments represents only 24.6%, it is necessary to introduce weights into the analysis to reproduce the correct proportions with respect to the total police force.

Before calculating the actual analysis weights, further analysis of the distribution of the number of total police by size category for the 449 departments that responded to the questionnaire was done (Panel A of Table B-1). In particular, since the largest size category is open-

APPENDIX B

SAMPLE WEIGHTS FOR ANALYSIS

Table B-1

Distribution of Total Police in Sampled Departments
by Size and Calculation of Sample Weights

A. Distribution of Total Police by Size:

<u>Department Size</u>	<u>Percent of Total Police in Size Category</u>			
	<u>Original Sample</u>		<u>Returned Sample</u>	
500 or more officers	65.4%	(79)	65.6%	(58)
90-499 officers	32.3	(378)	32.1	(284)
40-89 officers	1.6	(63)	1.6	(47)
10-39 officers	0.6	(73)	0.6	(51)
1-9 officers	0.02	(16)	0.01	(9)
TOTAL =	100.0%	(609)	100.0%	(449)

B. Calculation of Sample Weights:

<u>Department Size</u>	<u>Percent of Total Police * in Size Class</u>	<u>Total Sample N</u>	<u>Returned N</u>	<u>Weight Factor</u>	<u>Weighted N</u>	<u>Percent of Total Based on Weighted N</u>
500+	50.4%	79	58	3.90	226	50.3%
90-499	24.6	378	284	.387	110	24.5
40-89	10.3	63	47	.979	46	10.2
10-39	12.1	73	51	1.058	54	12.0
1-9	2.6	16	9	1.444	13	2.9
TOTAL =	100.0%	609	449	---	449	100.0%

*This distribution is taken from Table 2-1. It is the percent distribution of the total 4242 police departments in the sampled counties.

ended (the largest departments contain over 20,000 police officers), were the very large departments more or less likely to respond? Is the distribution of returns within the largest size category skewed towards the largest departments so that the distribution of the total police force within the returned departments differs from our original sample of police departments? In our total sample of 609 local law enforcement agencies, those in the size category of 500 or more officers represent 65.5% of the total police force contained in the 609 departments.¹ The departments in the largest size category of the 449 departments that returned the questionnaire represent 65.4% of the total police force in these departments. The distribution of the police force across the remaining size categories is virtually identical to the original sample. The slight differential response rate of size of department has not significantly affected the distribution of law enforcement activity (represented by number of police officers).

The original sample of 609 departments was drawn with probabilities proportionate to their contribution to the total police force in our sampled counties. Thus, the top 79 (or 1.9%) of the 4242 departments in the sampled counties contain 50% of the police force. In order to obtain an adequate sample size, the two largest size categories of departments were given equal probabilities of being sampled (we sampled 100% of the departments in each of these two categories). However, these two categories contribute different proportions of total police (see Table

¹This proportion is higher than the 50.4% shown in Table 2-1 because the departments were sampled proportionate to size. The larger departments therefore contain an increased proportion of the total police force in our final sample of 609 departments.

2-1). For this reason, it is necessary that the final sample of returned questionnaires be weighted for the analysis so that the final sample of departments correctly represents the original distribution of law enforcement activity.

The weights used to achieve the correct proportionalities are calculated by multiplying the proportion of total police in a size category by 449 (for example, in the largest size category 50.4% of 449 = 226) and dividing by the actual returned number in that category (226 divided by 58 = 3.96). The resulting weighted sample sizes are shown in the column "Weighted N's" of Table B-1.

Note from the last column of Table B-1 Panel B that the weighted distribution of departments now matches the original distribution of law enforcement officers in our sample, as intended in the sample design. All of the analysis in this report thus reflects the law enforcement activity (number of officers) in departments with certain weapons policies and practices as described in the questionnaire.

We asked that the local departments return copies of their standard report forms with their questionnaire; specifically, we requested the incident, complaint, case investigation, arrest and property report forms and any other forms used by the department on which weapon information might be recorded. The purpose of this request was to allow a check on the types of information recorded in different situations.

The following is a presentation and discussion of the coding scheme that was developed to analyze the recording of weapon information by the police. This coding covers the information on the report form that would be used in the case of a violent crime and the information recorded on the property report form. The variables coded in each section include the type of form used, type of information requested about weapon and other information about the situation.

The coding of this information was done by Melanie Madaio who was also responsible for the editing and data entry of the police department questionnaire and thoroughly familiar with the purpose and aims of this study. We thank her for the conscientious, quality work throughout the project.

In addition to the basic standard report forms, many local departments also submitted copies of training manuals, report writing instructions or memoes to us which helped to categorize their report forms as to weapon information requested.

APPENDIX C

DESCRIPTION OF STANDARD REPORT FORM CODING

REPORT OF VIOLENT CRIME WEAPONS INFORMATIONIs there a special weapons/firearms report form?

- yes, for police discharge of firearms
- yes, for citizen discharge of firearms
- yes, for both situations

Type of report form used?

- all-purpose incident, complaint or investigation form
- special "personal crime" or "violent crime" report form
- combination of incident and additional "violent crime" form

What information is called for on weapon used/possessed?

- none called for on form; narrative only
- space or area provided for "weapon" or "tool"
- special boxes, codes or instructions to provide weapon details

Details requested

- type of weapon
- type of firearm
- caliber/barrel length/size
- color/finish
- make/brand/manufacture
- serial number
- age
- other (id marks, engravings, condition, etc.)

What information is called for on how weapon used?

- none called for on form; narrative only
- space for "how force used" or "how offense committed"
- special boxes for "weapon displayed", "weapon used" or "weapon possessed"

What information is called for on whether victim was injured?

- none called for on form; narrative only
- box, space or instructions to describe victim's injuries, hospitalization, etc.

REPORT OF FOUND, STOLEN OR RECOVERED PROPERTYType of form used?

- property section on all-purpose incident/investigation form
- special "property" report form
- combination of incident and other property forms

Is there a box or code for weapons/firearms recovered or stolen?

- no, "property" only or narrative only
- box or code for weapons/firearms involved

What type of property detail requested?¹

- none called for on form; narrative only
- "Description" with no detailed headings, instructions or questions
- details requested or headings on form

Details requested

- serial number
- value
- manufacturer/make
- size/caliber²
- color
- age
- other information (special markings, condition, etc.)

ARREST FORM INFORMATION³Is there a separate arrest report?

- yes

What information is asked on separate arrest report?

- suspect/defendant had weapon
- type of weapon
- type of firearm

¹The codes for property report form refer to the details requested for any property involved (not specifically weapons). Most department property forms record information about weapons in the same area as any other property involved in a case. The type of details requested about the property are typically general in nature, to refer to all property involved.

²Few department forms ask for caliber. Most of the details include only size.

³This information about the arrest forms was not used in the analysis for this report. This information was coded only for those departments with separate arrest reports. Many departments (44%) do not have a separate arrest report form. The information about the weapon on the arrest form would be available on the incident report form.

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END