

Glock ghost guns up for grabs on the dark web

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Credit: Australian National University

Australians have access to a wide variety of untraceable 'ghost guns' online along with a significant market of 3D printed weapon blueprints and kits, according to a new study from The Australian National University (ANU).

The report found conventional handguns were most popular on the dark

web with illicit market vendors offering stealth packaging to Australia.

Glock semi-automatic pistols made up over half, 57%, of all the handguns sold.

"There are lots of Glocks available. They are the standard law enforcement side arm, you see them in action movies," lead author Professor Roderic Broadhurst, from the ANU Cybercrime Observatory, said.

"They are trendy, slick and popular with gangsters and law enforcement.

"We think they are so popular on the dark web because they can be stripped down to their parts and sent through the post in pieces."

The researchers say [dark web](#) gun vendors take pride in their concealment methods and ability to "ghost" guns.

"The prices of these Glocks are roughly the same price as the offline equivalent but they are not registered or their serial numbers have been wiped off," Professor Broadhurst said.

"It theoretically makes them untraceable."

The study, produced for Australian Institute of Criminology tracked darknet markets between July and December 2019 and found 2,124 weapons for sale—1,497 handguns, 219 rifles, 41 submachine guns and 34 shotguns.

The most common categories were handguns (70.5%), followed by rifles (10.3%), ammunition (3.7%), submachine guns (1.9%), explosives (1.7%), shotguns (1.6%) and accessories (1.1per cent). Digital products (5.3%), CBRN (0.64%) and miscellaneous weapons (3.3%) were only

listed on omnibus markets.

Alongside decommissioned military weapons, ammunition and fake weapon advertisements by various law enforcement agencies, 3D printed [weapon](#) kits and blueprints are also an emerging online product.

"We were surprised how much self-help material there is available. There is kit available for cutting frames for weapons," Professor Broadhurst said.

"It is like selling a pattern for a dress. You can then make the main piece of the [firearm](#) using 3D printing but without the unique serial numbers required on legally manufactured firearm frames."

The researchers say hybrid metal and plastic 3D printed components and kits are also up for sale online.

"3D printing is getting better and we are definitely seeing a higher class of products. It used to be thought plastic would be too brittle but they are using harder plastics," Professor Broadhurst said.

"It's like standing on a piece of Lego—these pieces will not break."

The researchers say prices of firearms varied considerably depending on type and calibre and ammunition was often sold with a firearm with Bitcoin typically the preferred payment method.

"In Australia, where firearms ownership is strictly regulated, illicit firearms are in demand by organized crime groups and criminals. One gun in the wrong hands can do damage," Professor Broadhurst said.

Provided by Australian National University

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