



INFRASTRUCTURE, SAFETY,  
AND ENVIRONMENT

# ***The criminal purchase of firearm ammunition***

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## ***Supply-side strategies for the Los Angeles illegal firearm market***

- NIJ funded a project to study whether supply-side strategies could affect the illegal firearm market
  - **Information intervention**
    - Efficient use of crime gun trace data
  - Target **deterable purchasers** of firearms
    - 2,244 new gun buyers received letters during the 10-day waiting period
    - 7% of them did not return to pick up their gun
  - **Ammunition** sales in Los Angeles are logged, but prior to 2005 were not monitored for illegal purchases

# *Ammunition makes firearms more dangerous*

- Ammunition makes firearms more dangerous
  - 87,000 non-fatal injuries annually from gun shots
  - 17,000 gun suicides annually
  - 11,000 gun murders
  - 7,600 non-fatal injuries from being struck by a gun
- Firearms in the wrong hands are at particular risk
  - The basic policy idea is to restrict firearm and ammunition access to the “bad guys” without denying access to the “good guys”

## ***Los Angeles retailers log ammunition purchases***

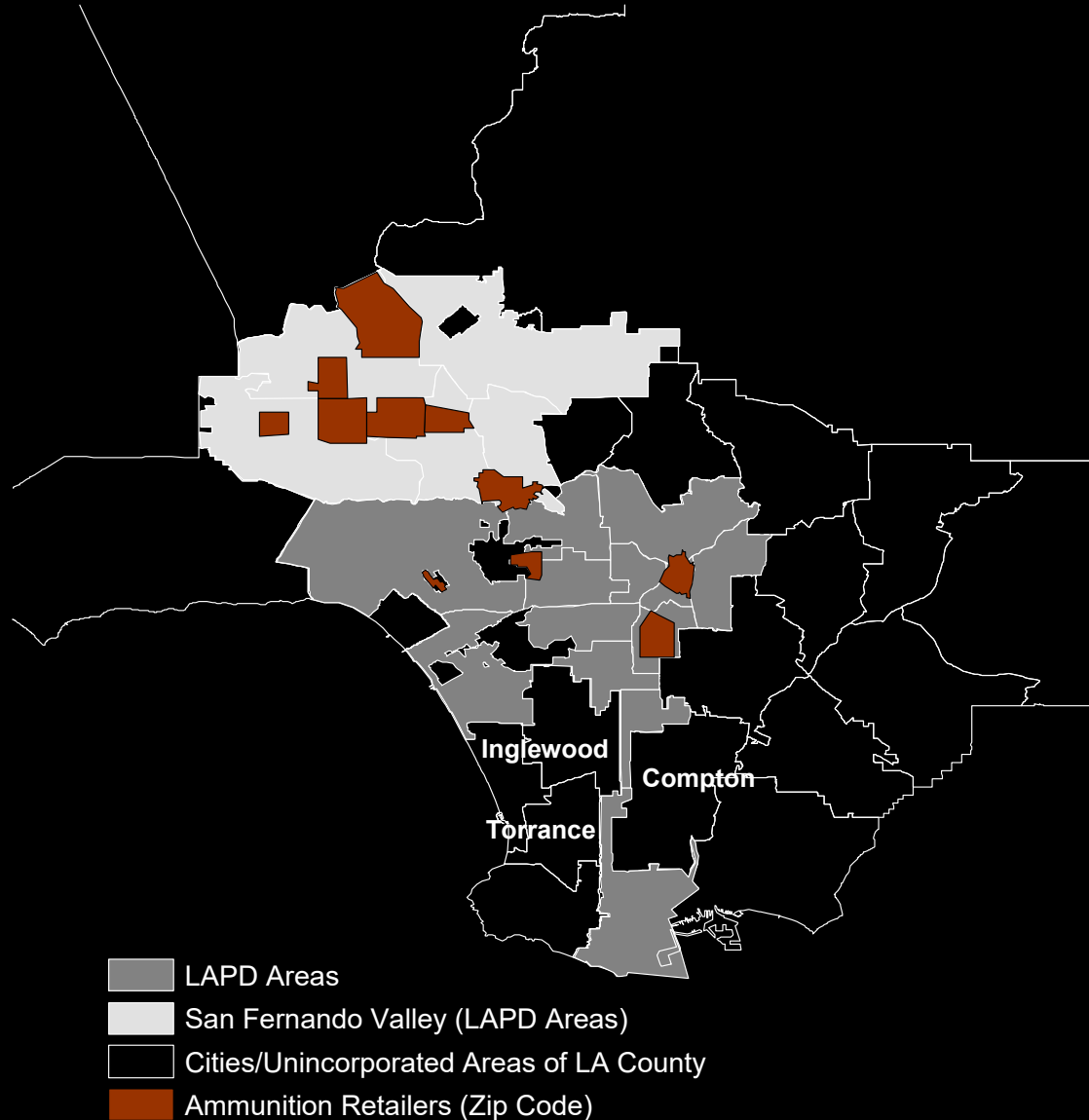
- **Los Angeles Municipal Code 55.11(c) (effective 1998)**

No vendor shall sell or otherwise transfer ownership of any firearm ammunition without at the time of purchase recording the following information on a form to be prescribed by the Board of Police Commissioners:

1. the **date** of the transaction,
2. the **name**, **address** and **date of birth** of the transferee,
3. the transferee's **drivers license** or other identification number and the state in which it was issued,
4. the **brand**, **type** and **amount** of ammunition transferred,

The vendor shall also at the time of purchase or transfer obtain the **right thumb print** of the purchaser or transferee on the above form.

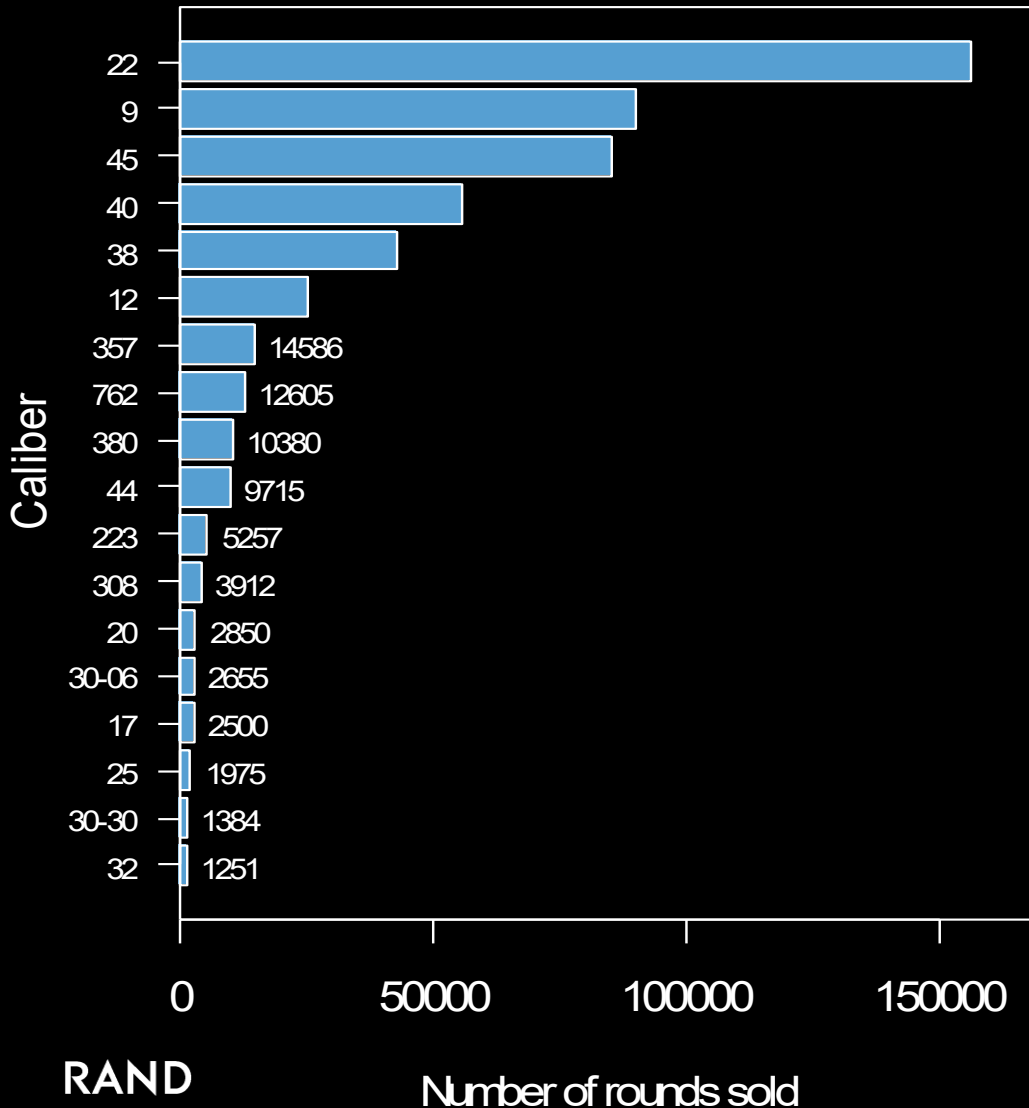
# *Ammunition retailers are mostly in the San Fernando Valley*



## ***Overview of the volume of sales***

- **All ammunition purchases in April and May 2004 from 11 ammunition outlets within the Los Angeles city limits**
  - **Number of rounds: 530,114**
  - **Number of boxes: 6,871**
  - **Number of transactions: 2,540**
  - **Number of purchasers: 2,031**
- **Not included: two police facilities, a garage ammo manufacturer, a gun range, and a sporting goods store**

# *Rounds sold by caliber*



- 22, 9mm, and 45 are most common
- 762 can be an assault rifle round

***Ammunition purchasers are  
younger than gun purchasers***

Age	Handguns	Ammo
21-24	9.0%	15.4%
25-34	23.5%	28.6%
35-44	25.3%	24.1%
45-54	24.1%	18.0%
55-64	12.9%	8.7%
65+	5.2%	2.9%



## ***Purchasers with criminal histories***

- **2,031 unique purchasers**
- **Many have criminal records**
  - **Number with criminal record:  $133/2031 = 6.5\%$**
  - **Number prohibited:  $52/2031 = 2.6\%$**
  - **Number with felony:  $30/2031 = 1.5\%$**
  - **Prohibited possessors purchase 3.3% of all rounds**
  - **Prohibited possessors make 2.8% of all purchases**
- **DROS denial rate for handguns in 2000 = 0.82%**

## ***Purchasers connected with crime guns***

- **2,031 unique purchasers**
- **ATF collects data on recovered firearms**
  - **Number with traced guns: 51**
    - **Number of possessors of crime gun: 11**
  - **Reasons for ATF trace**
    - **Safe keeping (11), carrying concealed (7), illegal possession (7), weapon offense (4), aggravated assault (4)**

## ***Policy Implications***

- **California legislature aims to improve ability to track and trace ammunition**
- **An instant background check for ammo likely would push ammunition transactions to straw purchasers, out-of-state purchases, and garage reloading**
- **Police can scan ammunition logs, easily obtain search warrants for prohibited purchasers, and follow the ammunition to the guns**



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