



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

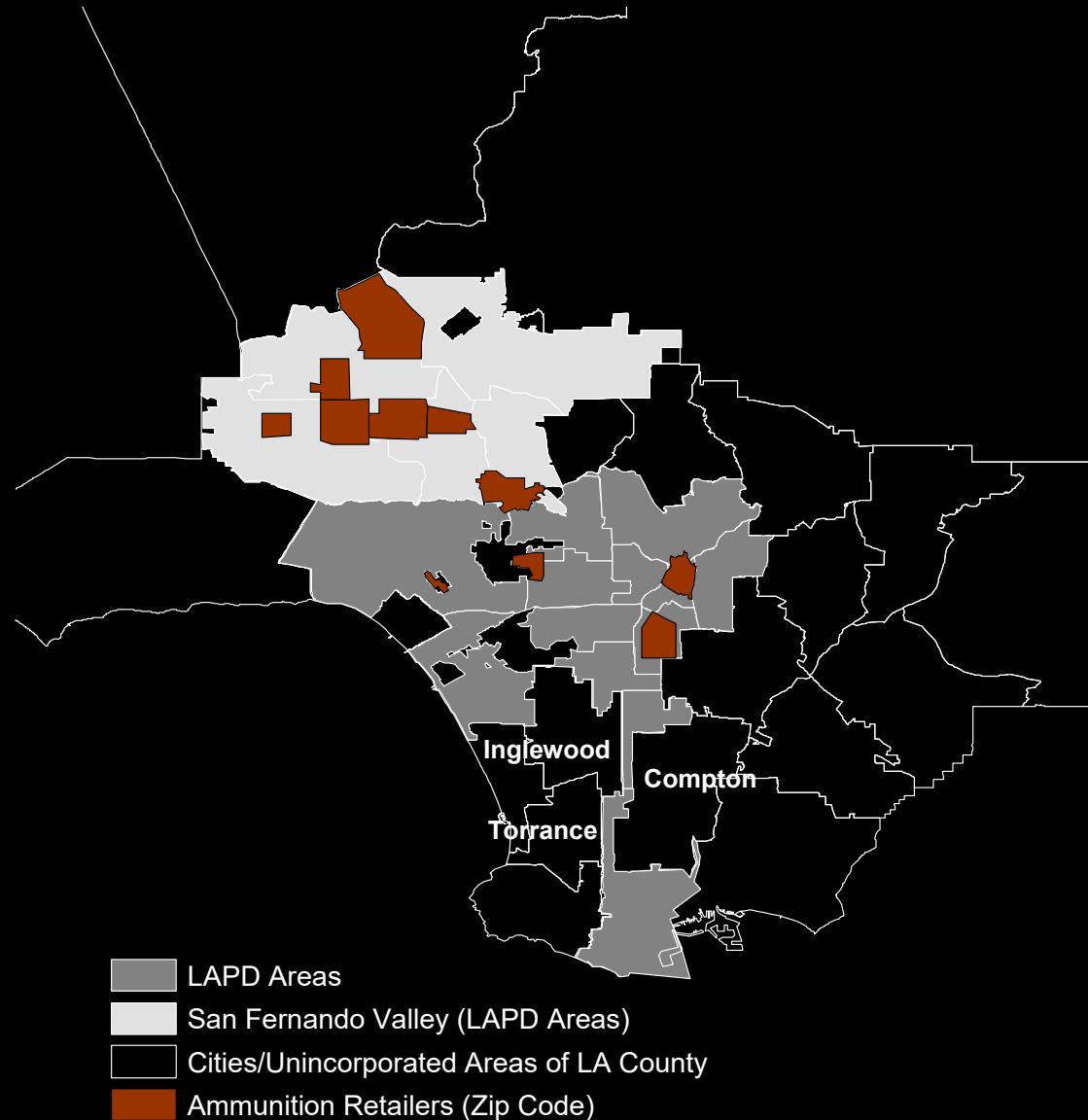
- **Los Angeles Municipal Code 55.11(c) (effective 1998)**

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.

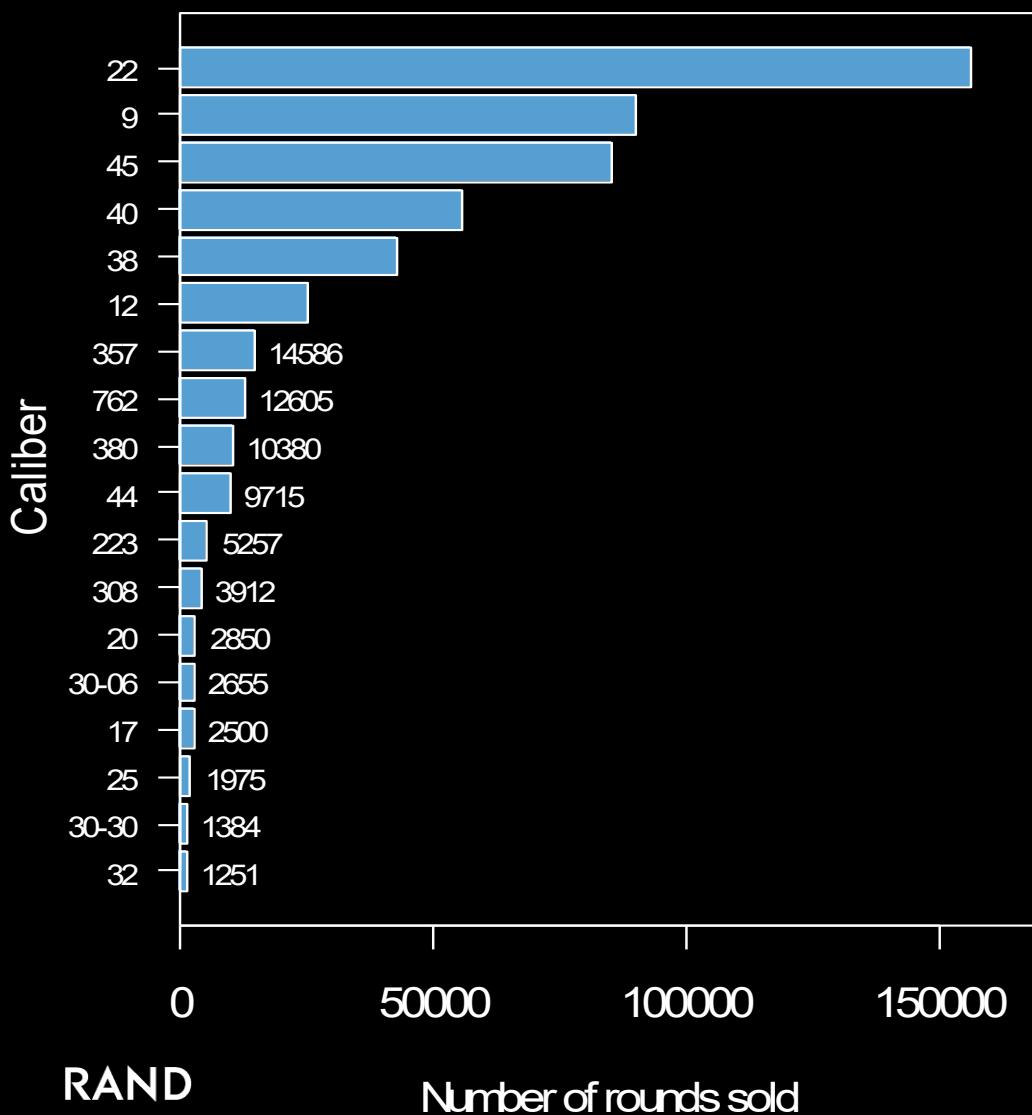
Ammunition retailers are mostly in the San Fernando Valley



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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