



## The Youth Crime Gun Interdiction Initiative (YCGII) 27 Communities

February 1999

### Highlights

**Second Year of ATF Trace Reports.** *The Crime Gun Trace Analysis Reports: The Illegal Youth Firearms Market in 27 Communities* (the *Trace Reports*) provides the second year of ATF reports on crime gun trace information from cities where law enforcement officials have made a commitment to tracing all recovered crime guns. The first YCGII *Trace Reports* analyzed 37,000 crime gun traces from 17 cities; this Report analyzes over 76,000 crime gun traces from 27 cities.

**Survey of Gun Trafficking Investigations.** ATF is also releasing the YCGII *Performance Report*, a survey of over 640 trafficking investigations nationwide involving juveniles and youth initiated since YCGII began in July 1996. The investigations involved over 27,000 reported trafficked firearms.

**Firearms Trafficking as a Source of New, Used and Stolen Crime Guns.** The *Trace Reports* confirm that illegal trafficking is occurring in new guns. Newer crime guns — those recovered by law enforcement officials within a relatively short period of time after first retail sale by a Federally firearms licensee (FFL) — accounted for between 25 and 36 percent of juvenile crime guns, between 32 and 49 percent of youth crime guns, and between 27 and 40 percent of adult crime guns. Since a National Tracing Center trace can establish the first retail purchaser, but not transfers subsequent to that transaction, trafficking in older firearms cannot be indicated through crime gun trace analysis. However, the *Performance Report* confirms that juveniles and youth offenders are obtaining both new and older firearms through trafficking. Over three quarters of the investigations involved trafficking in new guns, over half involved trafficking in used guns, and over a third involved trafficking in stolen firearms, both new and used.

**Trace Analysis Leading to Gun Traffickers.** The *Performance Report* shows that the most important factor leading to trafficking investigations involving juveniles and youth was analysis of trace and multiple sales records, which accounted for initiation of over 37 percent of the investigations. A number of Federal, State and local firearms enforcement initiatives using crime gun trace information are listed in the *Trace Reports*.

**Trafficked Guns Used in Subsequent Crime.** More than two-thirds of the illegal trafficking investigations reported in the *Performance Report* involved improperly transferred firearms that were known to have been subsequently involved in additional crimes. More than 23 percent of the investigations were associated with juvenile possession. Twenty-eight percent of the trafficking investigations were associated with assaults; nearly 18 percent were associated with homicides and 18 percent with robberies. More than 45 percent involved firearms associated with felons-in-possession, and more than half with other kinds of illegal possession. About 11 percent of the investigations involved National Firearms Act weapons violations, mostly sawed off shotguns or short barrel rifles and shotguns, but also machine guns, and firearms illegally converted from semiautomatic to fully automatic firearms.

**Multiple Illegal Trafficking Sources.** Half of the illegal trafficking investigations reported in the *Performance Report* involved firearms trafficked by straw purchasers, either an individual or a ring. A fifth of the investigations involved trafficking in firearms reported stolen from an FFL, including pawnbrokers. Unregulated private sellers, as distinct from straw purchasers or other traffickers, were involved in 14 percent of the trafficking investigations; six percent of the investigations involved FFLs as the primary traffickers; and about 10 percent of the investigations involved gun shows and similar venues where both FFLs and unregulated private vendors sell firearms. Nearly 14 percent of the trafficking investigations involved firearms stolen from a residence.

**Convicted Felons as Gun Traffickers.** Over a third of the traffickers involved in the illegal trafficking investigations reported in the *Performance Report* had prior felony convictions, as had just under a third of traffickers who were firearms thieves and robbers, and just under a quarter of the straw purchasers. Felons were able to buy guns by using false identification or giving false information to an FFL.

**Obliteration of Serial Numbers by Gun Traffickers.** For the eight cities included in the *Trace Reports* where there was a special effort made to collect complete crime gun trace data, an average of 11.4 percent of traced handguns had obliterated serial numbers. Many of these firearms were in the relatively high-powered 9mm and .380 calibers.

**Role of Juveniles (ages 17 and under).** Crime guns recovered from juveniles comprised over 11 percent of the trace requests analyzed in the *Trace Reports*. Juveniles were primarily involved in the illegal trafficking investigations reported in the *Performance Report* as possessors of firearms. But a quarter of the trafficking investigations also involved juveniles as thieves or robbers of firearms, and nearly a fifth of the investigations involved juveniles as gun traffickers.

**Role of Youth (ages 18 to 24).** Crime guns recovered from youth comprised over 32 percent of the trace requests analyzed in the *Trace Reports*; more crime guns were recovered from this seven year age group than from any other seven year age group in the juvenile and adult categories. Slightly fewer youth than juveniles were involved as thieves or robbers in the illegal trafficking investigations reported in the *Performance Report*, but youth were nearly twice as likely to be involved as traffickers and, due to age restrictions on the purchase of firearms, about ten times as likely to be involved as straw purchasers.

**Semiautomatic Pistols Predominate As Crime Guns.** Most of the crime guns analyzed in the *Trace Reports* were handguns (81 percent). Semiautomatic pistols dominated crime gun recoveries from juveniles (57.7 percent), youth (60.2 percent), and adults (46.6 percent) alike. Long guns, including rifles and shotguns, contributed a relatively greater proportion of the adult crime guns (24.6 percent).

**Intrastate and Interstate Firearms Trafficking.** The two ATF reports make it clear that both intrastate and interstate gun trafficking are important problems. Most crime guns analyzed in the *Trace Reports* were first sold at retail in the same State in which they were recovered by law enforcement. In 21 of the 27 cities, FFLs in the State in which the city is located supplied a majority of the traced crime guns. In four more of the 27 cities (Boston, Detroit, New York, St. Louis), FFLs in the State in which the city is located supplied a plurality — more crime guns than any single source State — while FFLs in the combination of all other source States supplied more than half of the traced crime guns. Jersey City was the only city in which FFLs from the State itself did not constitute the largest source of crime guns. Interstate trafficking investigations reported in the *Performance Report* were most frequent in the Northeast region, and least frequent in the Southwest. There were higher percentages of intrastate trafficking investigations relative to other regions in the Southwest, Central, and West regions of the United States.

**City Specific Problems Revealed by Tracing.** A city's trace information can suggest particular focus for local enforcement efforts. Some examples:

- *In-State vs. out-of-State sources.* The city with the highest percentage (81.5 percent) of traced crime guns originally purchased from in-State FFLs was Houston. The city with the lowest percentage (14 percent) of traced crime guns originally purchased from in-State FFLs was Jersey City.
- *Handguns vs. long guns.* Atlanta had a high proportion of traced crime guns that were semiautomatic pistols (71 percent), and very few that were shotguns and rifles (2.9 percent). In Minneapolis, rifles and shotguns comprised a much larger percentage of crime guns (32.3 percent), and semiautomatic pistols a relatively smaller percentage (45.7 percent).
- *Guns of choice.* Cities showed clusters of crime guns of particular investigative interest. For example, Baltimore's report showed a number of fast time-to-crime Hi-Point 9mm semiautomatic pistols recovered from youth (17 guns with time-to-crime information, of which 15 show recovery in under three years, with the fastest time-to-crime being three days). Tucson's report showed a number of fast time-to-crime Ruger 9mm semiautomatic pistols recovered from youth (28 guns with time-to-crime information, of which 20 show recovery in less than 3 years, with the fastest time-to-crime being 57 days). Many examples of this kind can be found in the *Trace Reports*.
- *Smaller and larger caliber.* In Miami, the ten most frequent kinds of crime guns recovered from youth are .38 caliber or higher. In Detroit, most of the top ten crime guns recovered from juveniles are smaller than .32 caliber.

**Regional Variations in Illegal Trafficking Investigations.** The relative mix of types of trafficking investigations reported in the *Performance Report* differed by region. Investigations involving *trafficking by straw purchasers or straw purchasing rings* were most prevalent in the Northeast and Central regions of the United States, and least prevalent in the Southwest and West. Investigations involving *trafficking in firearms stolen from FFLs* were most prevalent in the Southwest and least prominent in the Northeast. Investigations involving *unregulated private sellers*, as distinct from straw purchasers or other traffickers, were most prevalent in the West region, and investigations involving *FFL traffickers* were more frequent in the West and Central regions than in other regions.



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### Fast Time-to-Crime Youth and Juvenile Crime Guns

The following 10 firearms have the fastest time-to-crime of firearms that law enforcement officials recovered frequently from juveniles and youth. Fast time-to-crime means that the weapons move from initial retail sale by a Federally licensed firearms dealer (FFL) to recovery by a law enforcement official in three years or less. Time-to-crime in under three years is a trafficking indicator.



1. Lorcin 9mm Semiautomatic pistol



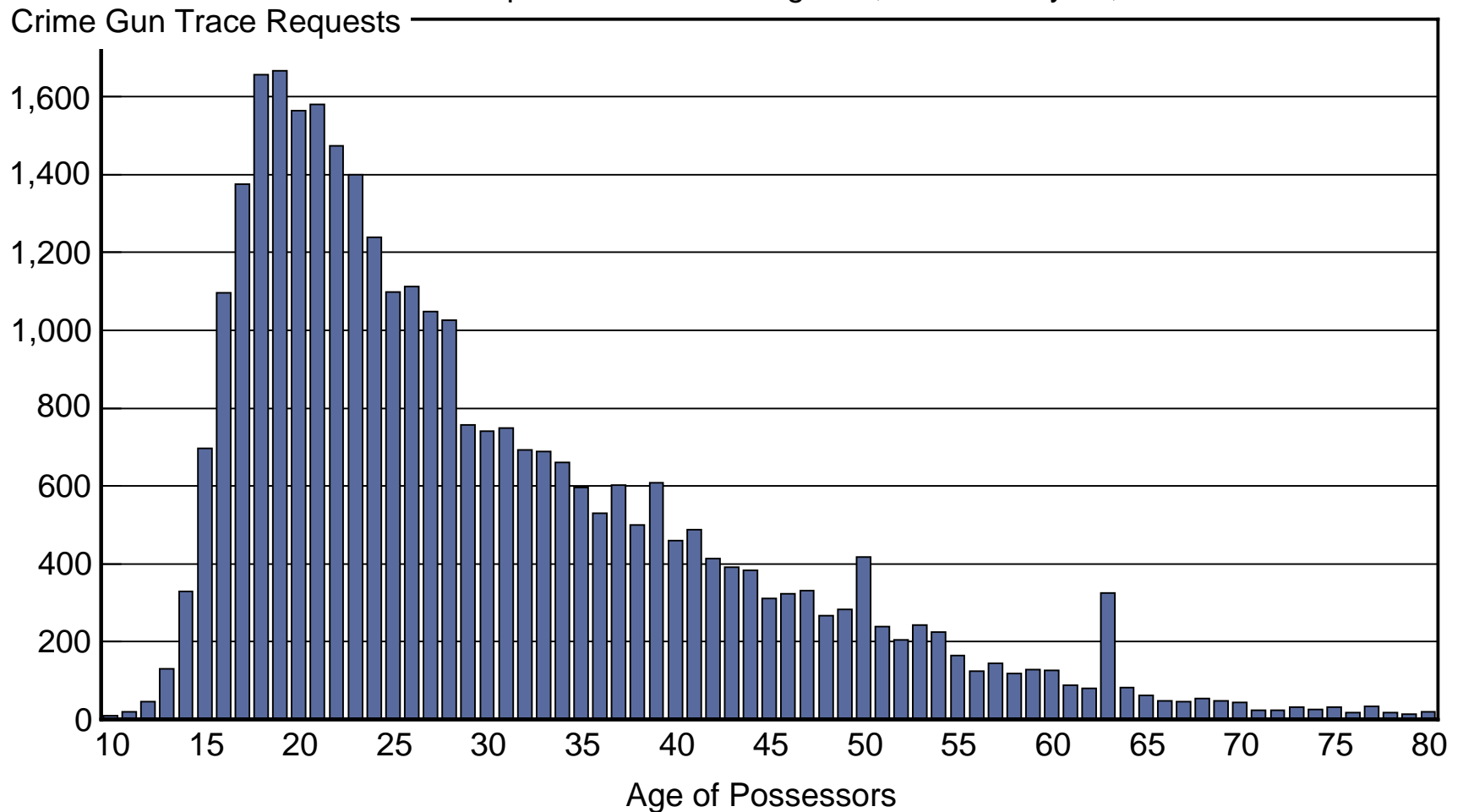
Top ten shortest time-to-crime firearms recovered, ranked in order from highest to lowest percentage in time-to-crime in under three years, for 75 or more firearms recovered, combined juvenile and youth, pooled 27 cities, based on trace requests submitted August 1, 1997 to July 31, 1998.



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## Age of Crime Gun Possessors

Based on trace requests submitted August 1, 1997 to July 31, 1998

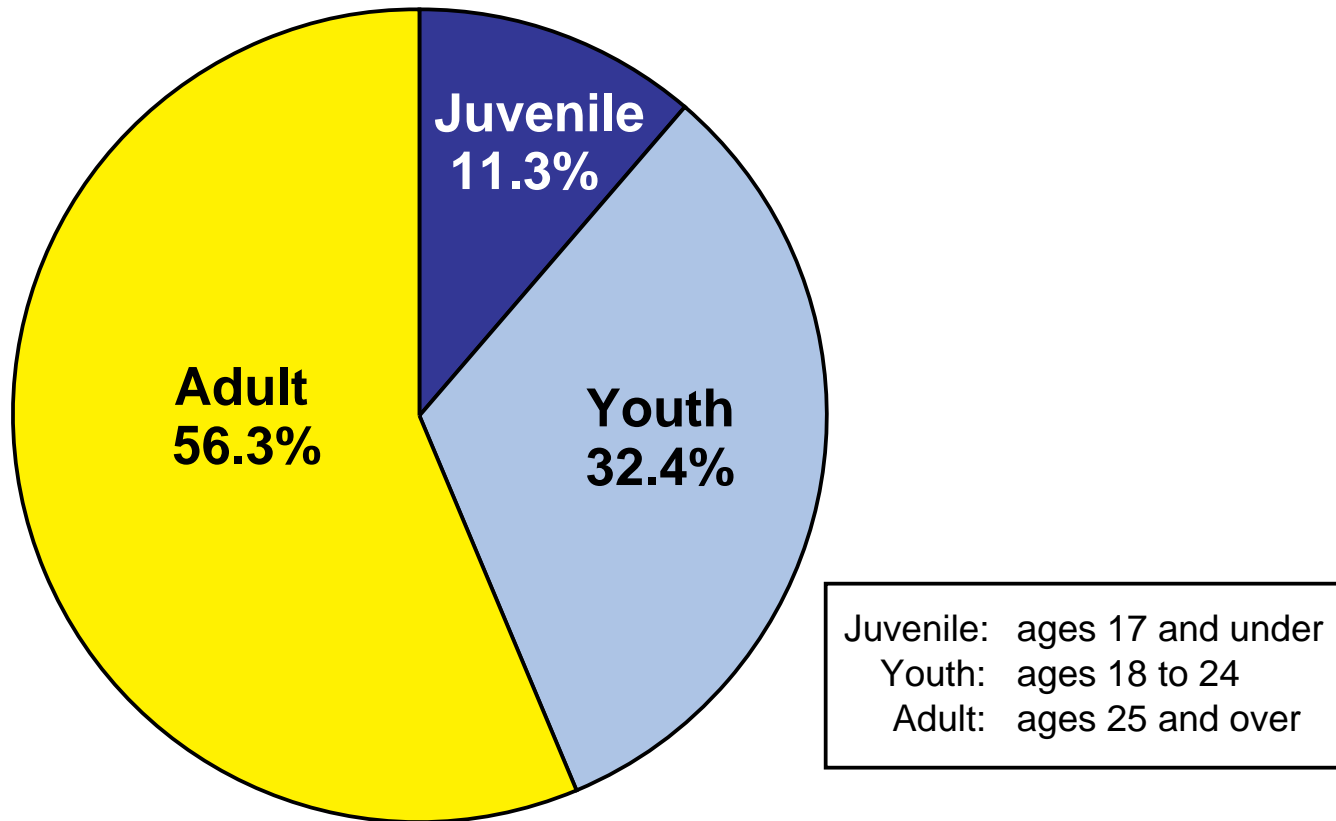




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## Age of Crime Gun Possessors by Age Group

Based on trace requests submitted August 1, 1997 to July 31, 1998



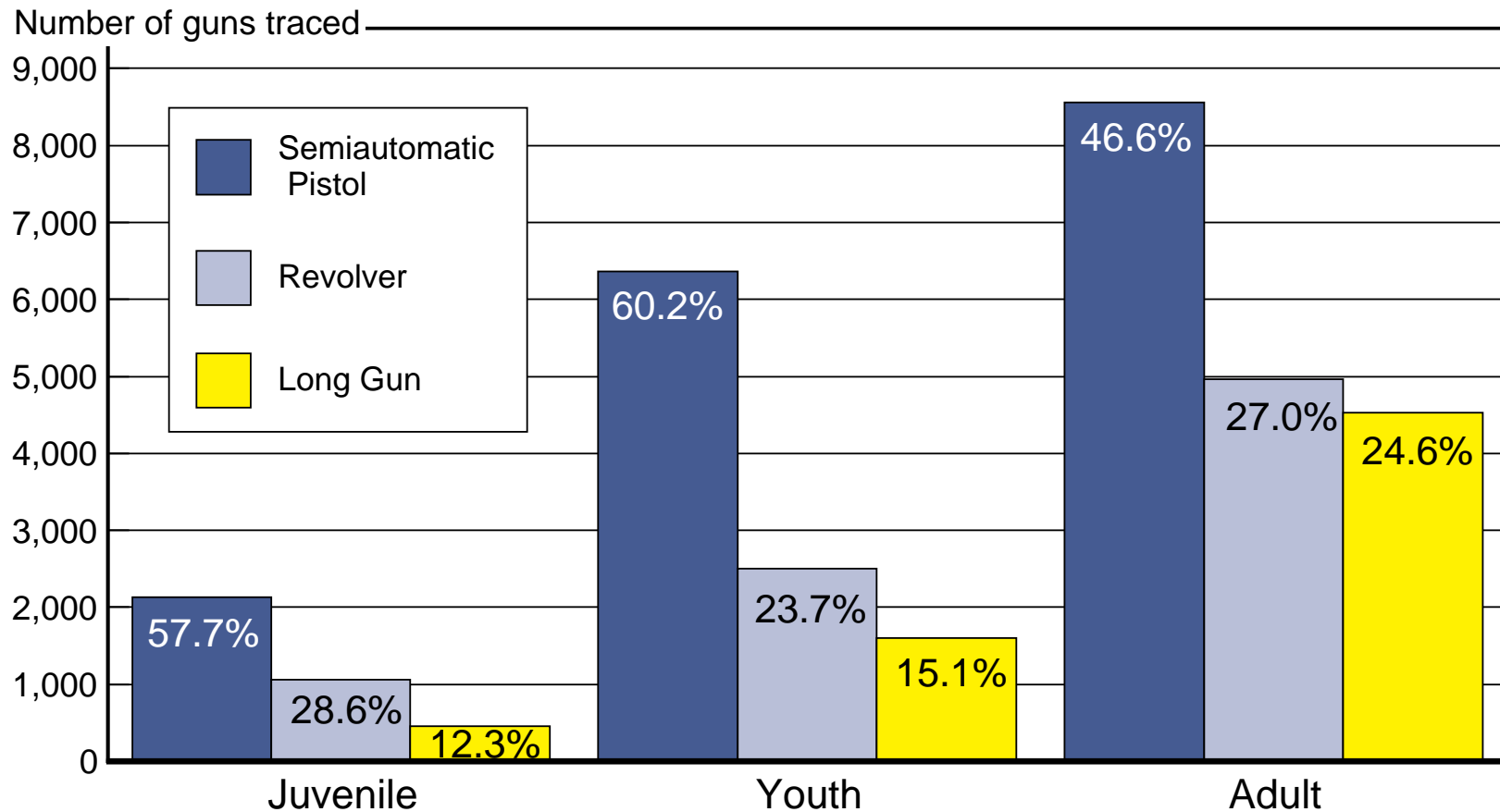
Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco & Firearms, Crime Gun Analysis Branch



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## Major Crime Gun Types by Possessor Age Group

Based on trace requests submitted August 1, 1997 to July 31, 1998



This graph does not include Derringers, Combination Guns, and Unknown Gun Types.

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