

# The guns in

Facts and figures

"Gun ownership is up, crime is down. What does that tell you?"

— Steve Helmsley, NRA lobbyist



▷ From 1990 through 1998, 41,656 Californians died from

gunshot wounds. The toll peaked in 1993 at 5,446 and dropped by 1998 to 3,333, an annual total slightly less than deaths from motor vehicle accidents.

▷ California logged 513,419 legal gun sales in 1999, the highest since 1993. The upsurge came at year's end, attributed in part to fears of Y2K chaos and efforts to beat a new ban on assault weapons.

▷ In 1997, gunfire was the cause of death for 1 of every 10 youths who died in California that year, including homicides, suicides and unintentional shooting deaths. Until crime rates began falling in recent years, firearm homicide



was the single leading cause of death for those 20 years and younger.

In California's 1998 homicides, a gun was used 69% of the time. Nationally, the pattern was the same, with killers using a handgun rather than a rifle or shotgun 8 out of 10 times.

▷ Medical costs for treating gunshot wounds in California came to \$127 million in 1996, or about \$19,000 per patient, with more than half those patients treated at public expense. When such factors as lost productivity are counted, annual costs rise to the billions.

▷ Nationally, there are roughly



210 million guns in private hands; California accounts for an estimated 26 million.

In California homes where a resident fatally shoots someone, only one to 10 times is the victim a stranger. In all other cases, the victim is someone known to the shooter — a spouse, friend or relative.

▷ U.S. firearm murders from 1994 to 1997 took more American lives than battlefield deaths during the nine-year war in Southeast Asia: 51,000 vs. 46,000.

▷ In the mid-1990s, about 6.5 million Californians, or 30% of the adult population, kept a gun in the house, compared to about 40% nationally. In one out of four California households where a handgun was present, those firearms remained loaded and in unlocked locations.

Sources: Assemblyman Jack Scott; Attorney General Bill Lockyer; Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms; California Department of Health Services, Epidemiology and Prevention for Injury Control (EPIC) branch; California Department of Justice, Firearms Division and Criminal Justice Statistics Center; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; Children's Defense Fund; FBI; Handgun Control; Journal of the American Medical Association; Los Angeles County Department of Health Services; National Rifle Association; UC Davis Dr. Garen J. Wintemute; Women Against Gun Violence; Youth Alive.

## gun facts



> About half a million married women in California are not aware, or do not report, that they live in a house where a gun is present.

> When a gun is on the premises during a domestic violence incident, the chances of a death occurring are 12 times higher than if no gun is available.

> Overall, a gun in the home increases the risk of death to occupants 2 to 3 times, and in the case of suicides, up to 5 times.

> Three years ago, between 5% and 10% of juvenile males across the country reported carrying a handgun, in public or to school. Among gang members, 30%-50% reported carrying a gun.

> The number of California's licensed gun dealers has dropped by half in recent years. But the 4,500 remaining still exceed the number of McDonald's restaurants by about four to one.

> Half of all guns used in crimes, when traceable, come from fewer than 1% of the nation's 77,000 licensed gun dealers.

> Deaths due to gun violence are decreasing for all age groups in Los Angeles County, from a peak of 2,168 in 1991 to 1,236 in 1998. But in 1997 and again in 1998, the numbers were creeping upward for one group—kids 14 years and under.

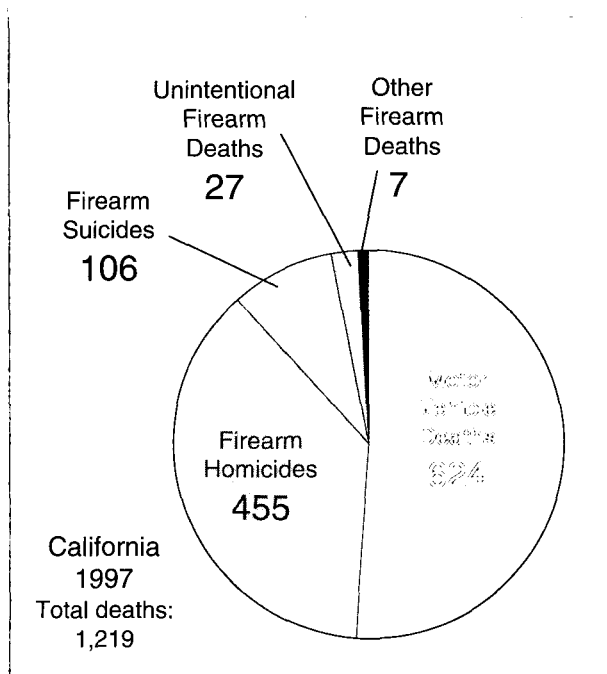
> In 1997, three children a day were killed or severely injured from gunshot wounds in Los Angeles County.

> Gang-related homicides have decreased 35% in Los Angeles County since a high was reached in 1995. But that still left 452 dead in 1997. 🏠

## gun facts

— Compiled by Max Vanzi

Firearms vs. Motor Vehicle Deaths Among Victims Under 70 Years Old



# The economic lining to



By Cynthia H. Craft

If California's big, bad anti-gun laws are so tough, how come the gun industry isn't up in arms? Some see a sheep in wolf's clothing in the new legislative package. Others detect the scent of greenbacks.