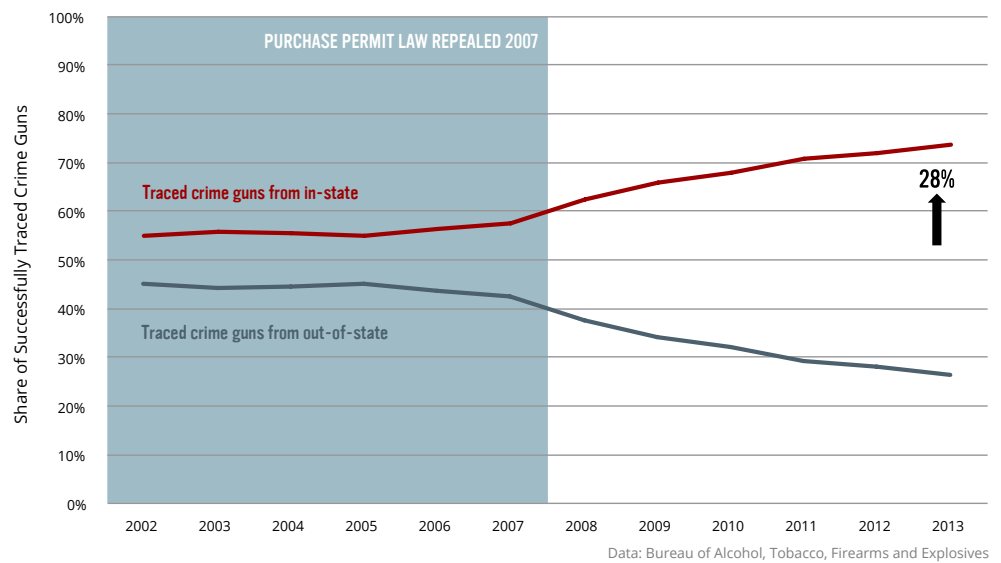


# LESSONS FROM MISSOURI: THE COST OF ELIMINATING BACKGROUND CHECKS

For several decades, Missouri required every handgun buyer to pass a criminal background check and obtain a purchase permit. In 2007, the state dismantled its permit system and eliminated the background check requirement. While federal law continues to require background checks for all gun sales by licensed dealers, handgun buyers who shop with unlicensed sellers in Missouri are no longer required to pass a background checks and get a permit. Felons, convicted domestic abusers, and other people legally prohibited from buying guns can evade background checks by seeking out unlicensed sellers, including at gun shows or online. A variety of data indicate that gun trafficking and gun homicides increased in the state as a result of the policy change.

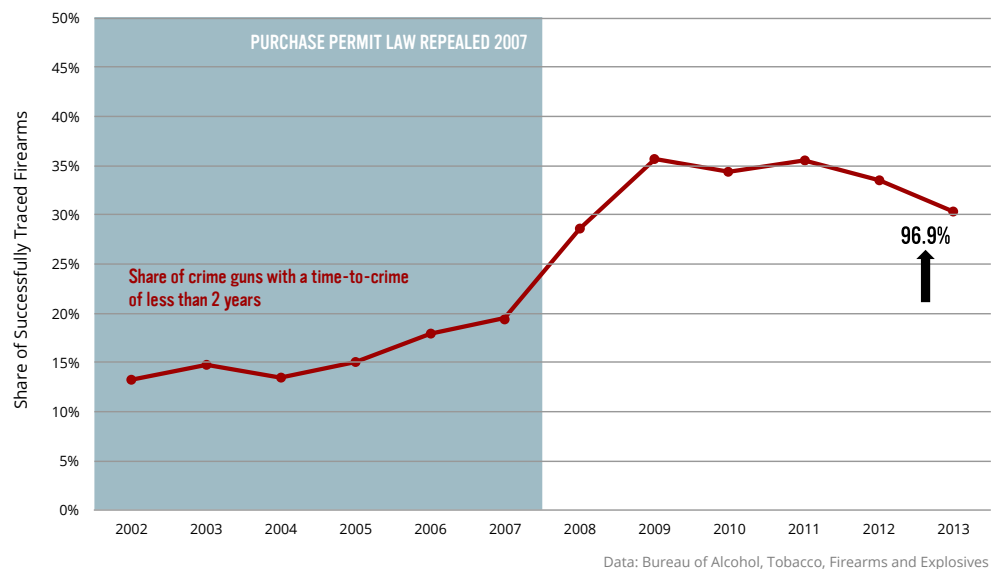
## A GROWING MARKET FOR CRIME GUNS

Repealing the background check requirement made it easier for criminals to buy guns in Missouri. Since repeal, the share of crime guns recovered in Missouri that were originally purchased in-state has grown by 28 percent.<sup>1</sup>



## INCREASED GUN TRAFFICKING

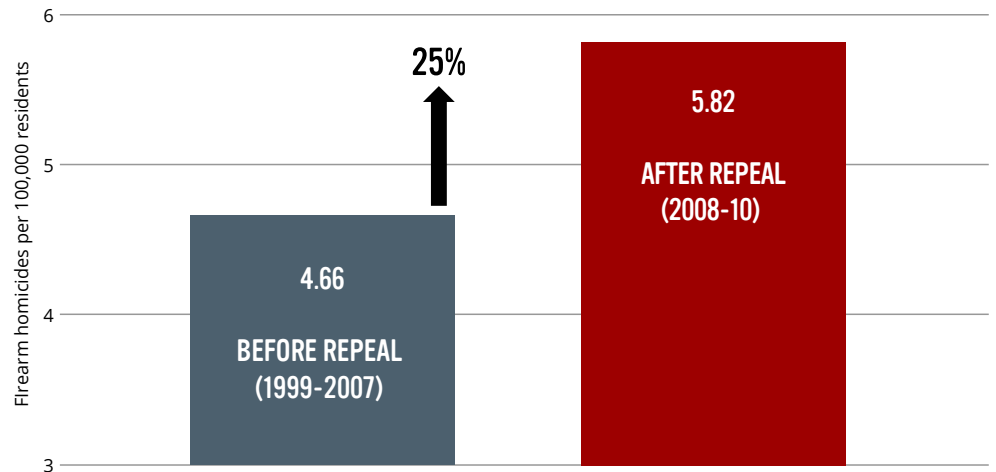
A key indicator of illegal gun trafficking is a “time to crime” – how long it takes after a retail gun sale for the weapon to turn up at a crime scene. A gun with a time to crime of under two years is more likely to have been trafficked. After the repeal of Missouri’s background check requirement, the share of guns recovered at Missouri crime scenes within two years of their retail sale nearly doubled.<sup>2</sup>



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## ADDITIONAL GUN HOMICIDES

Johns Hopkins University researchers showed that after controlling for other factors, repeal of the background check requirement was associated with a 25 percent increase in the gun homicide rate, or 68 additional firearm homicides each year.<sup>3</sup> Missouri's gun homicide rate is now the fifth highest in the nation, and 43 percent higher than the national average.<sup>4</sup>



Source: Daniel Webster, Cassandra Kercher Crifasi, and Jon S. Vernick, "Erratum To: Effects of the Repeal of Missouri's Handgun Purchaser Licensing Law on Homicides," *Journal of Urban Health* 91, no. 3 (June 2014).

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## NOTES

1. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, "Missouri," Firearms Trace Data - 2013, accessed April 10, 2015, <http://1.usa.gov/1y8tHA0>.
2. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, "Missouri," Firearms Trace Data - 2013, accessed April 10, 2015, <http://1.usa.gov/1y8tHA0>. See also: Webster DW, Vernick JS, McGinty EE, Alcorn T. "Preventing the Diversion of Guns to Criminals through Effective Firearm Sales Laws." Pages 109-122 in *Reducing Gun Violence in America: Informing Policy with Evidence and Analysis*, Daniel W. Webster and Jon S. Vernick, Eds. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013.
3. Daniel Webster, Cassandra Kercher Crifasi, and Jon S. Vernick, "Erratum To: Effects of the Repeal of Missouri's Handgun Purchaser Licensing Law on Homicides," *Journal of Urban Health* 91, no. 3 (June 2014): doi:10.1007/s11524-014-9865-8.
4. U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Fatal Injury Reports," Injury Prevention & Control: Data & Statistics (WISQARS), accessed April 10, 2015, <http://1.usa.gov/1plXBux>.