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Brain-wide connectivity patterns of feedforward and feedback cortico-cortical neurons in

the mouse secondary visual cortex

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ABSTRACT

Feedforward and feedback cortico-cortical neurons are distinct yet spatially intermingled subtypes distributed across cortical layers, playing specialized roles in sensory and cognitive processing. However, whether their presynaptic inputs differ to support these functions remains unknown. Using projection- and layer-specific monosynaptic rabies tracing, we mapped brain-wide long-distance inputs to multiple feedforward and feedback neuron types in VISl (also known as LM), the mouse secondary visual cortex. Overall, long-distance input patterns for these feedforward and feedback neurons were largely similar, as all received the majority of their inputs from VISp, the primary visual cortex, along with substantial inputs from various other cortical and visual thalamic regions. Despite their similarities, these feedforward and feedback types differed in the proportion of long-distance cortical inputs originating from specific visual, retrosplenial, and auditory cortices. These findings reveal the input connectivity patterns of cortico-cortical neurons based on feedforward and feedback projections, providing an anatomical framework for future studies on their functions and circuit integration.

KEYWORDS

cortical hierarchy, cortico-cortical neurons, feedforward and feedback neurons, mouse visual cortex, rabies tracing

KEY POINTS

1) Feedforward and feedback cortico-cortical projection neurons in VISl form largely distinct populations that are distributed across multiple cortical layers.

61   **2)** Four different feedforward and feedback cortico-cortical projection neuron types receive

62   broadly similar patterns of long-distance input across the brain.

63   **3)** Despite overall similarities, feedforward and feedback neurons differ in the relative

64   proportions of inputs from specific areas, including visual, retrosplenial, and auditory cortices.

INTRODUCTION

The mammalian cortex is responsible for high-level perception and cognition and is composed of numerous interconnected cortical areas (Felleman and Van Essen, 1991; Oh et al., 2014; Gămănuţ et al., 2018). These areas communicate through long-distance inter-areal connections mediated by excitatory cortico-cortical projection neurons (CCPNs). Two key organizational features of the mammalian cortex are its six-layered laminar structure and its hierarchical organization (Felleman and Van Essen, 1991; Cajal, 1995). Each cortical layer is considered as a different information-processing unit (Harris and Shepherd, 2015). CCPNs in a specific layer of each cortical area can be further divided into feedforward projection neurons, which send axons to higher-order cortical areas, and feedback projection neurons, which project to lower-order cortical areas. These two neuronal types are thought to process distinct types of information, feedforward neurons primarily transmitting sensory input from the external world and feedback neurons modulating contextual factors such as attention, brain states, and background information (Hupé et al., 1998; Nassi et al., 2013; Keller et al., 2020; Debes and Dragoi, 2023). Despite their distinct roles, these feedforward and feedback neurons are spatially intermingled within cortical layers (Berezovskii et al., 2011). Recent advances have elucidated their functional roles (Keller et al., 2020; Fişek et al., 2023), however, it remains unclear whether feedforward and feedback projection neurons within a specific layer of a given cortical area receive distinct or similar brain-wide presynaptic inputs. Uncovering this would provide insight into their proposed functional differences.

The mouse visual cortex serves as an ideal model for investigating the brain-wide connectivity of layer- and projection-specific cell types at a cellular level. This is due to the availability of viral genetic tools that enable precise labeling of neurons based on their axonal projections (e.g.,

retrograde tracer such as AAVretro) and laminar identity (e.g., layer-specific Cre-expressing

transgenic mouse lines) (Gerfen et al., 2013; Tervo et al., 2016; Chatterjee et al., 2018; Matho et

al., 2021). Additionally, the hierarchical organization of mouse visual cortical areas has been

well characterized both anatomically and functionally (Harris et al., 2019; Siegle et al., 2021;

D'Souza et al., 2022). The mouse visual cortex comprises the primary visual cortex (VISp) and

at least ten different higher visual areas (HVAs), including the lateromedial (VISl) and

posteromedial (VISpm) visual cortices (Wang and Burkhalter, 2007). In the cortical hierarchy,

VISp represents the lowest level, VISl occupies an intermediate position, and VISpm is at a

higher level (Harris et al., 2019; D'Souza et al., 2022). Within this framework, CCPNs in VISl

that project to VISpm are defined as feedforward neurons, whereas those projecting to VISp are

defined as feedback neurons (D'Souza et al., 2022). This makes VISl particularly suitable for

studying spatially intermingled feedforward and feedback CCPNs.

Previous studies have mapped the monosynaptic inputs of layer-specific excitatory neuronal

types (Vélez-Fort et al., 2014; DeNardo et al., 2015; Kim et al., 2015, 2020; Yao et al., 2023a).

These studies suggest that long-distance input connectivity to specific layer-defined neuronal

classes can be either distinct or largely comparable and that local connectivity varies (DeNardo

et al., 2015; Yao et al., 2023a). However, it remains unclear whether feedforward and feedback

CCPNs within the same cortical layer receive distinct brain-wide monosynaptic inputs,

highlighting a critical gap in our understanding of cortical circuit organization.

To investigate the brain-wide monosynaptic input connectivity of layer-specific feedforward and

feedback CCPNs in the mouse visual cortex, we employed the intersectional G-deleted rabies

tracing method - cTRIO (cell-type specific inputs and outputs relationship) (Schwarz et al.,

2015). Using an intersectional approach that combined layer-specific Cre recombinase with

projection-specific tTA trans-activator expression, we defined distinct subtypes of feedforward

and feedback CCPNs in layer 2/3 (L2/3) and 5 (L5) of VISl. We then mapped their long-distance

monosynaptic inputs using rabies tracing, leveraging two avian receptors, TVA and TVA[66T], for

avian sarcoma leukosis virus glycoprotein EnvA (Wickersham et al., 2007; Miyamichi et al.,

2013). Thus we are able to trace the monosynaptic inputs to neuronal subtypes which were

previously inaccessible to brainwide mapping efforts. Our findings reveal that while the overall

input patterns to L2/3 and L5 feedforward and feedback CCPNs in VISl are largely comparable,

there are notable differences in the proportions of long-distance inputs from the visual, auditory,

and retrosplenial cortices. The experimental design presented here provides a framework for

investigating hierarchical brain-wide networks across different species and brain structures

beyond the mouse visual cortex. This study also provides a comprehensive presynaptic input

connectivity map that will serve as a foundation for future experimental and theoretical

investigations into cortico-cortical neuronal functions.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Resource and materials availability

Further information and requests for resources and materials should be directed to and will be

fulfilled by the lead contact, Euiseok J. Kim (ekim62@ucsc.edu). Microscopy and any additional

data reported in this paper will be shared by the lead contact upon reasonable request.

Experimental animals

GENSAT BAC transgenic *SepW1-Cre* NP39 and *Tlx3-Cre* PL56 mouse lines have been

previously described (Gerfen et al., 2013). The transgenic mice were maintained on C57BL/6J

backgrounds. C57BL/6J mice were used as wild-type. Both male and female mice were used. All

mice were housed with a 12-hour light and 12-hour dark cycle and *ad libitum* access to food and

water. All animal procedures were performed in accordance with the University of California,

Santa Cruz animal care and use committee (IACUC)'s regulations.

Virus preparation

All adeno-associated viruses (AAVs) and SAD B19 EnvA-pseudotyped glycoprotein (G)-deleted

rabies virus (EnvA+RVdG) were produced by the Salk Viral Core GT3: scAAVretro-hSyn-BFP

$(1.26 \times 10^{12}$ GC/ml), scAAVretro-hSyn-H2B-eGFP $(1.16 \times 10^{13}$ GC/ml), scAAVretro-hSyn-H2B-

mCherry $(1.21 \times 10^{13}$ GC/ml), AAVretro-nEF-lox66/71-tTA $(4.8 \times 10^{13}$ GC/ml), AAV8-TRE-

DIO-oG $(5.92 \times 10^{12}$ GC/ml), AAV8-TRE-DIO-eGFP-T2A-TVA $(7.00 \times 10^{13}$ GC/ml), AAV8-

TRE-DIO-TVA^{66T}eGFP-P2A-oG $(7.40 \times 10^{13}$ GC/ml), and EnvA+RVdG-mCherry $(7.71 \times 10^{8}$-

$1.43 \times 10^{10})$ Infectious Unit (IU)/ml.

Animal surgery for virus injection

For all surgeries anesthesia induction was with 100 mg/kg of ketamine and 10 mg/kg of xylazine

cocktail via intraperitoneal injections, and anesthesia was maintained as needed with ~1%

isoflurane. Mice were mounted in a stereotax (RWD instruments) for surgery and stereotaxic

injections. For rabies tracing experiments, *SepW1-Cre* NP39 or *Tlx3-Cre* PL56 mice received

AAV helper injections at postnatal day (P)63-P125. 50-200 nl of AAVretro-nEF-lox66/71-tTA

was injected into the center of the medial secondary visual cortex (VISpm), primary visual

cortex (VISp), or anterior cingulate area (ACA) using the following coordinates: 1.6 mm rostral,

1.5 mm lateral relative to lambda and 0.4-0.6 mm ventral from the pia for VISpm or 1.1 mm

rostral, 2.6 mm lateral to lambda and 0.45-0.67 mm ventral from the pia for VISp, 0.4 mm

rostral, 0.4 mm lateral to bregma and 0.7-0.8 mm ventral from the pia for ACA. A 50 nl mixture

of 9:1 AAV8-TRE-DIO-oG and AAV8-TRE-DIO-eGFP-T2A-TVA, a 50 nl mixture of 2:7:1

AAV8-TRE-DIO-oG, 1x PBS and AAV8-TRE-DIO-eGFP-T2A-TVA, or 50 nl of AAV8-TRE-

DIO-TVA^{66T}eGFP-P2A-oG was injected into the center of the lateral secondary visual cortex

(VISl), using the following coordinates: 0.7 mm rostral, 3.65 mm lateral relative to lambda and

0.4-0.6 mm ventral from the pia. We injected AAVs using air pressure using a 1 ml syringe with

18G tubing adaptor and tubing. To prevent virus backflow, the pipette was left in the brain for 5-

10 minutes after the completion of the injection. After recovery, mice were given water with

ibuprofen (30 mg/kg) and subcutaneous carprofen (5 mg/kg). Two weeks after AAV helper

injection, 100 nl of EnvA+RVdG-mCherry was injected into the same site in VISl using a 1 ml

syringe-mediated air pressure. After recovery, mice were again given water with ibuprofen (30

mg/kg) and subcutaneous carprofen (5 mg/kg) and housed for seven days to allow for trans-

synaptic rabies spread and fluorescent protein expression.

For retrograde colocalization studies, mice were prepared and head-fixed as previously with the

same coordinates for VISpm, VISp, and ACA as above. For triple AAV colocalization

experiments, combination of 50-100 nl of scAAVretro-hSyn-BFP, scAAVretro-hSyn-H2B-

mCherry, scAAVretro-hSyn-H2B-eGFP were injected into one of VISp, VISpm, and ACA.

AAV was left to express for 18-21 days before the tissue harvest and histology. For VISpm/VISp

colocalization experiments, 50-100 nl of cholera toxin subunit B conjugated to Alexa fluor 647

(CTB-647, 1 mg/ml, Invitrogen C34778), Alexa fluor 555 (CTB-555, 1 mg/ml, Invitrogen

C22843) and/or Alexa fluor 488 (CTB-488, 1 mg/ml, Invitrogen C34775) was injected into

VISpm, VISp, and/or ACA, respectively. Three or four days later, the tissue was harvested for

histology. Detailed information of injections on individual mice can be found in Table 1.

Histology and image analysis

Brains were harvested after trans-cardiac perfusion using phosphate-buffered saline (PBS)

followed by 4% paraformaldehyde (PFA). Brains were dissected out from skulls and post-fixed

with 2% PFA and 15% sucrose in PBS at 4°C overnight and then immersed in 30% sucrose in

PBS at 4°C before sectioning. Using a freezing microtome, 50-100 μm coronal brain sections

were cut and stored in cryogen (30% ethylene glycol, 30% glycerol, 30% ddH$_2$0, 10% 10x PBS)

at 4°C, every other section was stained and mounted for data analysis and quantification. Before

staining, sections were washed 3x 10 minutes in PBS and permeabilized and blocked in PBS/5%

normal donkey serum (Millipore S30-100ML)/1% Triton-X 100 (Sigma-Aldrich X100-100ML)

for two hours at room temperature. To enhance eGFP and mCherry signals, free-floating sections

were incubated at 4°C overnight with goat anti-GFP (1:1000; Rockland 600-101-215,

RRID:AB_218182) and rabbit anti-dsRed (1:500; Clontech 632496, RRID:AB_10013483)

primary antibodies in PBS/0.5% normal donkey serum/0.1% Triton-X 100, followed by 3x 10

minutes in PBS wash and incubation with the appropriate secondary antibodies conjugated with

Alexa 488 or 568 (1:500; Invitrogen A-11055 (RRID:AB_2534102) or A-10042

(RRID:AB_2534017), respectively). Sections were counterstained with 10 μM DAPI (4',6-

diamidino-2-phenylindole) in PBS for 30 minutes to visualize cell nuclei, followed by 3x 10

minutes in PBS wash. Immunostained tissue sections were mounted on slides with a polyvinyl

alcohol mounting medium containing DABCO (PVA-DABCO) and allowed to air-dry overnight.

All sections were scanned with a 10x/0.45 NA (wd-2.0 mm) objective on a Zeiss AxioImager Z2

Widefield Microscope using tile scan and Z-stack (every 6-8 µm). Representative images were

taken with the Zeiss 880 Confocal Microscope with 10x/0.45 NA (wd-2.0 mm) or 40x/ 0.95 NA

corr (wd-0.25 mm) objectives. Scanned images were first processed in Zeiss ZEN 3.11 with

DAPI images for alignment and fluorescent images for eGFP+ or mCherry+ cell detections

exported for processing. Subsequent image files were processed and analyzed using Bell Jar for

long-distance input mapping (Soronow et al., 2025). For alignment, the center Z-stack DAPI

images were used to predict the section's xy coordinates and cut angle for alignment to the Allen

Brain Common Coordinate Framework reference atlas (Wang et al., 2020). Alignments were

then fine-tuned in Bell Jar to ensure fit and minimize counting rabies-labeled cells resulting from

minor TVA expression leakage in non-Cre-expressing neurons (Wall et al., 2010). Layers for

VISpm and VISp were also manually fine-tuned to ensure accuracy. The exported Zeiss ZEN

files with mCherry+ signals were used for automated cell counting. Using Bell Jar, max

projection images were produced from the Z-stacks, and these max projections were then

sharpened in the program before detection. Detection thresholds were kept stable unless manual

counting validation showed less than 90% accuracy of cell labeling, in which case the confidence

interval was adjusted (three out of 15 brains) to ensure accurate counting. Cell detection and

brain alignment were then integrated, and the long-distance ipsi-hemispheric cortical input

fractions were calculated and graphed using GraphPad Prism 10.1.1. For thalamic input

proportions, areas and cells were drawn and counted manually on Zeiss ZEN 3.11 using the

Allen Brain Common Coordinate Framework reference atlas (Wang et al., 2020).

Quantification and Statistical analysis

The values of n and what n represents are reported in results and figure legends. For statistical

significance, two-way ANOVA with Tukey's multiple comparisons test was performed with

GraphPad Prism 10.1.1. A one-way ANOVA with the Fisher's Least Significant Difference

(LSD) post hoc for multiple comparisons test was performed using IBM SPSS 30. Unless

otherwise noted, statistical significance is indicated as follows: $*p < 0.05$; $**p < 0.01$; $***p <$

0.001; $****p < 0.0001$. In Fig. 4C, significance is denoted differently: $*$(black) $p < 0.05$ and

$*$(magenta) $p < 0.01$.

RESULTS

Feedforward and feedback cortico-cortical projection neurons of VISl are largely non-

overlapping and distributed across layers

We first investigated the long-distance projection targets of CCPNs in VISl using published data

from the Allen Mouse Brain Connectivity Atlas (Harris et al., 2019). This dataset provides high-

resolution maps of eGFP+ axonal projections in adult mouse brains, generated by injecting

AAV1-CAG-FLEx-eGFP into Cre-expressing transgenic mice to label specific neuronal

populations in different brain regions. To examine CCPNs in VISl, we analyzed data from *Cux2-*

IRES-Cre and *Tlx3-Cre* mice, which label layers 2-4 (L2-4) and L5 CCPNs, respectively. Whole-

brain projection maps revealed that both L2-4 and L5 CCPNs extend axons to more than 13

cortical areas, including visual areas as VISp, VISpm, and VISpor and non-visual areas such as

the temporal association cortex (TEa) and the anterior cingulate area, dorsal part (ACAd) (Fig.

1A-B). Quantitative analysis of the axonal projection volumes across these regions showed that

L2-4 and L5 CCPNs exhibit similar projection patterns, with the highest projection volume in

VISp ($39.43 \pm 3.20\%$ in *Cux2-IRES-Cre* and $29.75 \pm 3.80\%$ in *Tlx3-Cre*, mean $\pm$ SEM),

followed by VISpm, VISpor, VISli, and VISrl (Fig. 1B). Notably, L2-4 CCPNs exhibit sparse

axonal projections to ACAs ($1.10 \pm 0.28\%$), whereas $3.55 \pm 0.95\%$ of the total axonal

projections from L5 CCPNs target ACAd (Fig. 1B).

Next, we investigated whether CCPNs in VISl that project to three major cortical target areas

(VISp, ACA/MOs (secondary motor cortex), and VISpm) represent distinct or overlapping cell

types at the single-cell level. To retrogradely label these projection neurons with three different

fluorescent markers, we stereotaxically injected AAVretro-hSyn-H2B-mCherry into VISp,

AAVretro-hSyn-BFP into ACA/MOs, and AAVretro-hSyn-H2B-eGFP into VISpm in wild-type

adult C57BL/6J mice (Fig. 1C). Thus, VISl neurons projecting to VISpm, VISp, and

ACA/MOs—designated as VISl→VISpm, VISl→VISp, and VISl→ACA, respectively. In VISl

of these mice, labeled CCPNs were distributed across layers 2-6. The majority of neurons were

labeled by a single fluorescent protein (VISl→VISpm $90.97 \pm 2.08\%$, VISl→VISp $92.25 \pm$

5.04%, VISl→ACA $87.94 \pm 4.60\%$, n = 2 mice) with relatively few exhibiting double or triple

labeling (Fig. 1C). These findings indicate that CCPNs projecting to VISpm or ACA/MOs

(feedforward, FF) and VISp (feedback, FB) do not extensively share axonal collaterals consistent

with a previous study (Berezovskii et al., 2011). Therefore, VISl→VISpm, VISl→VISp, and

VISl→ACA CCPNs are largely distinct neuronal subpopulations.

Brain-wide monosynaptic input mapping of feedforward and feedback CCPNs in VISl

We examined whether long-distance inputs to feedforward and feedback neurons align with one

of three possible organizational models (Fig. 2A). In Model 1, these neurons receive inputs from

the same areas they project to, establishing a reciprocal connectivity pattern that facilitates

looped computations. In Model 2, feedforward and feedback neurons differ in the type of

information they relay; feedforward neurons preferentially receive inputs from lower sensory

areas such as VISp and the dorsal lateral geniculate nucleus of the thalamus (LGd), while

feedback neurons receive inputs from higher cortical areas that convey contextual information

such as higher cortical areas and the lateral posterior thalamic nucleus (LP). In Model 3, both

feedforward and feedback neurons receive inputs from the same brain regions, making them

anatomically indistinguishable. In this scenario, despite similar long-distance anatomical inputs,

feedforward and feedback neurons may exhibit distinct functional roles due to differences in

local circuit computations. Alternatively, the long-distance inputs themselves may differ

functionally, even if their anatomical connectivity proportion from each brain region appears

similar.

To differentiate between these three models, we mapped and characterized the brain-wide long-

distance inputs to distinct feedforward and feedback CCPNs in VISl. We implemented an

intersectional rabies tracing strategy called cTRIO to map monosynaptic inputs in a projection-

and layer-specific manner. We first injected a helper virus mixture of AAV8-TRE-DIO-oG

(rabies glycoprotein) (Kim et al., 2016) and AAV8-TRE-DIO-eGFP-T2A-TVA into VISl, along

with AAVretro-nEF-lox66/71-tTA (hereafter AAVretro-tTA) into projection targets, including

VISpm, VISp, and ACA, in L2/3-specific *SepW1-Cre* or L5 CCPN-specific *Tlx3-Cre* transgenic

mice (Gerfen et al., 2013). This ensured Cre- and tTA-dependent expression of the avian TVA

receptor and rabies glycoprotein (oG). This approach enabled selective labeling of feedforward

and feedback neurons in L2/3 or L5 (Fig. 2D). 14 days later, EnvA-pseudotyped glycoprotein

(G)-deleted rabies virus (EnvA+RVdG)-mCherry was injected into the same VISl location to

enable monosynaptic input tracing from the starter neurons. After seven days, brains were

harvested, sectioned, immunostained with goat anti-eGFP (Rockland 600-101-215,

RRID:AB_218182) and rabbit anti-dsRed (Clontech 632496, RRID:AB_10013483) antibodies,

and imaged to quantify brain-wide long-distance inputs.

Control experiments to optimize layer- and projection-specific monosynaptic rabies tracing

We conducted a series of experiments to optimize our monosynaptic rabies tracing approach.

Our goal was to minimize false-positive long-distance labeling and prevent contamination of the

starter neuron population. Such issues could arise from 'leaky' expression of transgenes such as

TVA and oG independent of Cre and tTA activity (Wall et al., 2010; Lavin et al., 2020), as well

as from unintended damage to long-distance axonal tracts in the white matter (Watakabe and

Hirokawa, 2018) (Fig. 3).

To examine the absence of false-positive long-distance rabies labeling, we first injected AAV8-

TRE-DIO-eGFP-T2A-TVA (without oG) into VISl and AAVretro-tTA into VISp of *Tlx3-Cre*

mice (Fig. 3A). 14 days later, we administered EnvA+RVdG-mCherry into VISl and harvested

the brains seven days post-injection (Fig. 3A). As expected, in the absence of oG, no mCherry+

rabies-labeled neurons were detected outside of the injection site (VISl) (Fig. 3B-B').

In additional controls, we injected either a mixture of AAV8-TRE-DIO-eGFP-T2A-TVA and

AAV8-TRE-DIO-oG (Fig. 3C), or AAV8-TRE-DIO-TVA^{66T}eGFP-P2A-oG alone (Fig. 3E) into

VISl or VISp, but without AAVretro-tTA injections. In both cases, following EnvA+RVdG-

mCherry and a seven-day incubation period, no mCherry+ rabies-labeled neurons outside of the

injection site (Fig. 3C-D', E-F')

Next, to assess the purity of starter neurons and verify whether L2/3 or L5 VISl→VISp CCPNs

contained only VISl→VISp neurons, we injected AAV8-TRE-DIO-TVA^{66T}eGFP-P2A-oG into

VISl and a mixture of AAVretro-tTA and Alexa Fluor 647-conjugated cholera toxin subunit B

(CTB) into VISp of *Tlx3-Cre* mice (Fig. 3G-H), and collected brains three weeks later. Confocal

imaging showed that TVA[66T]eGFP-P2A-oG labeled L5 neurons in VISl were also labeled with

CTB, showing that they were VISl→VISp neurons (Fig. 3H).

To determine whether VISl→VISpm neurons were included in the L2/3 VISl→VISp starter

population due to passing axons in the grey matter of lower cortical layers (Watakabe and

Hirokawa, 2018), we injected AAV8-TRE-DIO-TVA[66T]eGFP-P2A-oG into VISl, AAVretro-tTA

into VISp, and CTB into VISpm of *SepW1-Cre* mice (Fig. 3I-J). Confocal images of brain

sections harvested three weeks later showed that TVA[66T]eGFP-P2A-oG expressing neurons were

not labeled with CTB, indicating that virus-labeled starter neurons did not include VISl→VISpm

neurons (Fig. 3J). These experiments validate our approach, ensuring specificity in identifying

monosynaptic inputs while preventing false positives and potential starter population

contamination.

Long-distance cortical inputs onto four different CCPN types in VISl

We examined whether the four types of feedforward and feedback CCPNs (L2/3 VISl→VISpm,

L2/3 VISl→VISp, L5 VISl→VISpm, L5 VISl→VISp) in VISl receive similar or distinct

monosynaptic inputs from other cortical areas within the ipsilateral hemisphere (Fig. 4 and Table

2). Rabies-labeled long-distance input neurons to those four types of CCPNs were distributed

throughout both visual and non-visual cortical areas (Fig. 4A), with the highest proportion

originating from VISp (L2/3 VISl→VISpm 0.409 ± 0.046, L2/3 VISl→VISp 0.380 ± 0.030, L5

L5 VISl→VISpm 0.492 ± 0.016, L5 VISl→VISp 0.582 ± 0.023, Fig. 4B). We quantified and

ranked the top 20 cortical regions contributing inputs along the cortical hierarchy (Harris et al.,

2019). While overall input patterns among the four CCPN types were largely similar, we

identified key differences. L5 VISl→VISp feedback neurons received a greater proportion of

long-distance inputs from VISp compared to L5 VISl→VISpm feedforward neurons (Fig. 4B).

Similarly, L2/3 VISl→VISpm feedforward neurons received a significantly greater proportion of

their inputs from VISpm than L2/3 VISl→VISp feedback neurons (Fig. 4C).

Further statistical analysis using one-way ANOVA revealed that at least one of the four CCPN

types exhibited a significantly different proportional input than other CCPNs in eight out of the

20 cortical areas analyzed (Fig. 4C): VISpm, VISpl, AUDd, AUDp, RSPv, RSPagl, RSPd, and

MOs. Overall, these findings suggest that while the four CCPN types receive broadly

comparable long-distance cortical inputs, they exhibit distinct preferences for specific cortical

regions, reflecting their functional roles in cortical processing. Notably, L5 VISl→VISpm

CCPNs receive proportionally more retrosplenial cortex input, suggesting a greater role in visuo-

spatial memory, and L2/3 CCPNs regardless of projection receive proportionally more auditory

cortex input suggesting a greater role for L2/3 CCPNs in audio-visual integration (Fig. 4B-C).

We next investigated the laminar distribution of long-distance presynaptic inputs from VISp and

VISpm to four distinct types of feedforward and feedback CCPNs in VISl. Although prior

studies have reported preferential long-distance connectivity between superficial layers and

between deep layers (DeNardo et al., 2015; Kim et al., 2015), it remains unclear whether CCPNs

in specific layers of a given cortical area receive layer-specific long-distance inputs, depending

on their feedforward or feedback projections. To address this, we quantified the proportion of

input neurons across each layer of VISp and VISpm (Fig. 5A-B) for four distinct CCPN types in

VISl: L2/3 VISl→VISpm, L2/3 VISl→VISp, L5 VISl→VISpm, and L5 VISl→VISp. With a

few exceptions, the laminar distribution of input neurons in VISp and VISpm did not reveal

statistically significant differences across these neuronal groups (Fig. 5A-B).

We investigated whether feedforward neurons in VISl that project to cortical areas with higher

hierarchy scores than VISpm exhibit more distinct input connectivity patterns from those of

VISl→VISp compared to VISl→VISpm neurons. Previous studies have shown that the cortical

hierarchy in rodents is relatively shallow compared to that of primates (Harris et al., 2019;

D'Souza et al., 2022). The hierarchy scores based on layer-termination patterns of cortico-

cortical connection (Harris et al., 2019) for select cortical areas are as follows: VISp: -0.239,

VISl: -0.148, VISpm: 0.074, ACAd: -0.060, ACAv: 0.404, and MO: 0.282., To determine if the

shallow hierarchy in the mouse visual cortex was masking hierarchy dependent input differences,

we injected AAVretro-tTA into ACA/MOs and a mixture of AAV8-TRE-DIO-oG and AAV8-

TRE-DIO-eGFP-T2A-TVA into VISl of *Tlx3-Cre* mice to label VISl→ACA/MOs (hereafter,

VISl→ACA) neurons and traced their monosynaptic inputs across the cortex. We then compared

these results with monosynaptic input tracing of L5 VISl→VISpm feedforward neurons and L5

VISl→VISp feedback neurons (Fig. 5C). We found broadly similar input connectivity profiles

across these three L5 CCPN subtypes. Thus, the input connectivity of L5 VISl→ACA CCPNs is

comparable to that of VISl→VISpm CCPNs and does not exhibit greater differences from

VISl→VISp CCPNs than from VISl→VISpm CCPNs. Notably, the proportion of inputs from

VISp to VISl→VISp neurons was higher than that to VISl→VISpm and VISl→ACA neurons

(Fig. 5C).

Long-distance thalamic input neuron profiles onto four different CCPN types in VISl

Next, we examined whether the four types of feedforward and feedback CCPNs in VISl receive

distinct presynaptic inputs from visual thalamic regions. In the mouse visual system, LGd

projects to VISl and other higher visual cortical areas in addition to VISp, while LP and the

laterodorsal nucleus of the thalamus (LD) also provide input to VISl and other visual cortical

regions (Bienkowski et al., 2019).

In rabies-traced brain sections, we identified three thalamic nuclei, LGd, LD, and LP, and

quantified the proportion of rabies-labeled neurons among all these input areas (Fig. 6A). Across

all four CCPN types, LP provided the majority of thalamic inputs, followed by LGd and LD,

consistent with a previous study (Yao et al., 2023a) (Fig. 6B). While the overall proportions of

thalamic inputs were similar, we observed that L2/3 VISl→VISpm neurons received a lower

proportion of inputs from LGd compared to L5 VISl→VISpm neurons (L2/3 VISl→VISpm:

0.102 ± 0.008 and L5 VISl→VISpm 0.323 ± 0.027, p=0.0030, two-way ANOVA with Tukey's

multiple comparisons test) (Fig. 6B). Conversely, L2/3 VISl→VISpm neurons received a higher

proportion of inputs from LP than L5 VISl→VISpm neurons (L2/3 VISl→VISpm 0.887 ± 0.004,

L5 VISl→VISpm 0.657 ± 0.024, p=0.0021, two-way ANOVA with Tukey's multiple

comparisons test) (Fig. 6B).

DISCUSSION

Using a layer- and projection-specific monosynaptic rabies tracing approach, we mapped brain-

wide inputs to five distinct types of feedforward and feedback CCPNs in VISl. This study

provides the first comprehensive connectivity maps to investigate the organizational principles

governing feedforward and feedback neurons in relation to their laminar positions and the

hierarchical positions of their target areas. Our findings indicate that long distance input

connectivity patterns are largely comparable across CCPN subtypes, supporting Model 3 (Fig.

2A), but notable differences emerge based on their laminar and projection identities. First, L2/3

VISl→VISpm CCPNs received a higher proportion of inputs from their own projection target,

VISpm, compared to L2/3 VISl→VISp and other L5 CCPNs. Similarly, L5 VISl→VISp CCPNs

received a higher proportion of inputs from VISp, their projection target, compared to L5

VISl→VISpm or VISl→ACA CCPNs. These results are in accordance with Model 1 (Fig. 2A),

in which monosynaptic inputs preferentially originate from the neurons' axonal targets (Kim et

al., 2020; Siu et al., 2021). These insights provide a foundation for future functional and

theoretical studies aimed at understanding brain-wide cortical computations at the cellular level.

The input-output organization of neural networks provides crucial insights into the information

they receive and the signals they transmit for functional processing. Therefore, understanding

neuronal connectivity patterns is essential for a comprehensive understanding of neural circuit

function and computation (Zeng and Sanes, 2017). Previous studies have demonstrated that

distinct neuronal cell types in the mammalian brain exhibit characteristic input connectivity

patterns. Even within broader neuronal classes, spatially intermingled subtypes display subtype-

specific input connectivity (e.g., dopaminergic D1 receptor versus D2 receptor expressing spiny

projection neurons in the striatum or serotonergic neuron subtypes in the dorsal raphe; see also

whole-brain rabies tracing data) (Wall et al., 2016; Ren et al., 2018). A recent study found that

functionally distinct neuronal types in layer 2/3 of the mouse somatosensory cortex exhibit

distinct brain-wide input connectivity patterns (Inácio et al., 2025). For cortico-cortical

connectivity in the visual cortices, a previous study found that VISp CCPNs projecting to VISpm

or VISal received inputs from the same respective areas, suggesting a like-to-like connectivity

pattern (Kim et al., 2020). A previous study observed laminar differences in like-to-like

connectivity using Channelrhodopsin-2-assisted circuit mapping, where there is stronger like-to-

like connectivity in L5 compared to L2/3 neurons (Young et al., 2021). This observation of like-

to-like connectivity is further supported by a study in macaques, where V1 neurons projecting to

V2 receive monosynaptic feedback inputs from V2 but not from other V1-projecting areas (Siu

et al., 2021). In the mouse VISl, the secondary visual cortex, projection-specific input

connectivity is observed, though it appears less pronounced than in CCPNs of VISp, the primary

visual cortex. One possible explanation is that VISl→VISpm and VISl→VISp neurons share

similar medial axonal projection trajectories, whereas VISp→VISpm and VISp→VISal (VISp

CCPNs projecting to anterolateral, AL, visual cortex) neurons exhibit medial versus lateral

projection patterns. Another, not mutually exclusive, possibility is that the cortical hierarchy in

the mouse visual system is relatively shallow, making it more challenging to detect strong

hierarchical connectivity features.

To validate the projection identities of our starter neurons, we used CTB injections into both

target and non-target projection areas (Fig. 3G-J). However, given the collateralization properties

of some CCPNs (Han et al., 2018; Peng et al., 2021), it remains possible that certain starter

neurons project to additional areas beyond our intended target regions, including both VISpm

and VISp. This could introduce variability in rabies tracing results and complicate efforts to

restrict analyses to exclusive starter populations.

Monosynaptic rabies tracing is a powerful approach for mapping anatomical connections across

the brain; however, this method does not provide information about synaptic strength or other

functional properties of these connections (Callaway and Luo, 2015). For example, although

feedforward and feedback CCPNs may receive similar proportions of inputs from a given area, it

remains unclear whether these input neurons are functionally distinct—for example, whether

they exhibit different receptive field properties or belong to different functional subtypes. To

gain additional insight into the functional differences and similarities between feedforward and feedback CCPNs, future studies could complement rabies tracing with electrophysiological or imaging approaches. Additionally, advances in high-throughput molecular profiling, including single-cell RNA sequencing, have revealed that cortical neurons within a single layer can be further classified into distinct subtypes based on unsupervised clustering (Tasic et al., 2018; Yao et al., 2023b). Beyond their broad excitatory versus inhibitory or laminar identities, it would be valuable to examine whether long-distance input neurons exhibit specific connectivity patterns among these molecularly defined subtypes of CCPNs (Condylis et al., 2022).

It is also possible that, despite receiving similar long-distance inputs, feedforward and feedback neurons differ in their local circuit architecture. To further test Model 3 (Fig. 2A) and uncover additional anatomical distinctions, future studies using TVA^{66T}-dependent rabies tracing for local inputs, combined with molecular characterization of input neurons and electrophysiological profiling would be informative.

In this study, we used feedforward and feedback CCPNs in the VISl as a model to investigate connectivity differences. A key question for future research is whether similar connectivity profiles would be observed in other cortical regions, such as secondary somatosensory cortex projecting to primary somatosensory cortex as feedback CCPNs and secondary somatosensory cortex projecting to primary and secondary motor cortices as feedforward CCPNs (Yamashita et al., 2018). Given that the cortical hierarchy in mice is relatively shallow compared to that of higher mammals (Harris et al., 2019; D'Souza et al., 2022), it would also be interesting to explore these questions in species with a more robust hierarchical organization, such as marmosets or macaques.

Declaration of Interests

The authors declare no competing interests that could have influenced the contents of this publication.

 FIGURE LEGENDS

Figure 1. Whole-brain distributions of axonal projections from VISl CCPNs. (A) Top-down views of
whole-brain 3D reconstructions of axonal projections from VISl. (Top) L2-4 CCPNs in a *Cux2-IRES-Cre*
brain (Experiment: 287495026). (Bottom) L5 CCPNs in a *Tlx3-Cre* brain (Experiment: 520750912). Data
adapted from the Allen Brain Connectivity Atlas (https://connectivity.brain-map.org/projection). **(B)**
Percentage of total axon projection volume across 13 cortical areas from L2-4 VISl CCPNs in *Cux2-*
IRES-Cre (magenta, n = 2) and L5 VISl CCPNs in *Tlx3-Cre* (cyan, n = 3). **(C)** Confocal microscope
images showing the injection sites of AAVretro-H2B-eGFP, AAVretro-H2B-mCherry, and AAVretro-
BFP targeting ACAd/MO, VISp, and VISpm, respectively. Allen Reference Atlas (ARA) section
numbers are in the top left corner. **(D)** Representative confocal microscope images showing VISl CCPNs
retrogradely labeled based on their axonal projections to ACAd/MO, VISp, or VISpm. Arrows indicate
neurons that project to more than one of these target areas. Data are represented as mean ± SEM.

Figure 2. Long-distance connectivity models and projection- and layer-specific rabies tracing
strategy. (A) Three proposed models of long-distance monosynaptic input connectivity to feedforward
(FF) and feedback (FB) neurons. **(B)** Schematic of the intersectional rabies tracing strategy for projection-
and layer-specific long-distance input tracing to VISl neurons. **(C)** Representative scanning microscope
images overlaid with the Allen Brain Common Coordinate Framework reference atlas (Wang et al.,
2020), showing AAVretro-tTA targeting in three different areas: VISpm, VISp, and ACA. **(D)**
Representative confocal microscope images showing eGFP+mCherry+ starter neurons (arrowheads) in
VISl projecting to VISp, VISpm, and ACA in *SepW1-Cre* or *Tlx3-Cre* mice.

Figure 3. Control brains. (A) Schematic of the viral genetic tracing strategy for control injections
without oG (rabies glycoprotein). **(B)** Fluorescence microscope images showing the absence of labeled
cells outside the injection sites **(B')**. **(C,E)** Schematic of the viral genetic tracing strategy for control
injections without tTA. **(D-D', F-F')** Fluorescence microscope images showing the absence of labeled
cells outside the injection sites **(D', F')**. **(G, I)** Schematic of the viral genetic tracing strategy used to
verify the axonal projection targets of labeled starter neurons (TVA[66T]eGFP-P2A-oG+) by CTB
injections into either the expected projection target, VISp **(G-H)**, or a non-target area, VISpm **(I-J)**. **(H)**
Yellow arrowheads indicate starter neurons co-labeled with eGFP (cyan) and CTB (magenta), indicating
their axonal projections to VISp.

Figure 4. Long-distance input mapping of layer- and projection-specific CCPNs in VISl. (A)
Representative confocal images showing long-distance mCherry+ input neurons in LP, VISp, VISpm, and
RSP for four distinct feedforward and feedback CCPN types in VISl of *SepW1-Cre* or *Tlx3-Cre* mice. **(B)**
The ipsilateral cortical proportion of input neurons across 20 cortical areas, sorted by cortical hierarchy
(Harris et al., 2019). The red arrowhead indicates the rank of VISl along the cortical hierarchy. n = 3 mice
per each group. Two-way ANOVA with Tukey's multiple comparisons test, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, ***
p<0.001, **** p<0.0001. **(C)** Results of one-way ANOVA with Fisher's Least Significant Difference
(LSD) post-hoc test for eight selected input regions. *(black) p<0.05, *(magenta) p<0.01. Data are
represented as mean ± SEM.

Figure 5. Further analyses of long-distance input neurons to CCPNs in VISl. (A) The distributions of
presynaptic input neurons across VISp layers to four distinct types of CCPNs in VISl. **(B)** The
distribution of presynaptic input neurons across VISpm layers to four distinct types of CCPNs in VISl.
(C) The proportion of long-distance input neurons located in each of the 20 cortical regions for the three
L5 CCPN types in VISl. n = 3 mice per each group for each figure. Two-way ANOVA with Tukey's
multiple comparisons test, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, **** p<0.0001. Data are represented as mean ± SEM.

Figure 6. Long-distance thalamic input mapping of layer- and projection-specific CCPNs in VISl.
(A) Representative confocal microscope images showing rabies-labeled mCherry+ input neurons in LGd

or LP. **(B)** Proportions of long-distance inputs from each visual thalamic region to four distinct types of
feedforward and feedback starter neurons in VISl. n = 3 mice per each group. Two-way ANOVA with
Tukey's multiple comparisons test, * $p<0.05$. Data are represented as mean ± SEM.

Table 1. Animal and experimental condition summary

Table 2. Quantification of rabies tracing in individual mouse brains

Abbreviations: AAV, Adeno associated virus; ACA, Anterior cingulate area; ACAd, Anterior cingulate
area dorsal; ACAv, Anterior cingulate area ventral; AIp, Agranular insular area, posterior part; AUDd,
Dorsal auditory area; AUDp, Primary auditory area; AUDpo, Posterior auditory area; AUDv, Ventral
auditory area; CCPN, Cortico-cortical projection neurons; CTB, Cholera toxin subunit B; cTRIO, Cell
specific tracing the relationship between input and output; ECT, Ectorhinal area; ENTl, Entorhinal area,
lateral part; ENTm, Entorhinal area, medial part, dorsal zone; EnvA, Envelope protein of avian leukosis
virus; FB, feedback neurons; FF, feedforward neurons; GU, Gustatory areas; HVA, Higher visual area;
LD, Lateral dorsal nucleus of thalamus; LGd, Lateral geniculate nucleus dorsal; LP, Lateral posterior
nucleus of the thalamus; Mop, Primary motor area; Mos, Secondary motor cortex; oG, optimized rabies
glycoprotein; ORBl, Orbital area, lateral part; PBS, Phosphate buffered saline; PERI, Perirhinal area;
PFA, paraformaldehyde; RSP, Retrosplenial cortex; RSPagl, Retrosplenial cortex agranular; RSPd,
Retrosplenial cortex dorsal; RSPv, Retrosplenial cortex ventral; SSp-bfd, Primary somatosensory area,
barrel field; SSp-ll, Primary somatosensory area, lower limb; SSp-m, Primary somatosensory area,
mouth; SSp-n, Primary somatosensory area, nose; SSp-ul, Primary somatosensory area, upper limb; SSp-
un, Primary somatosensory area, unassigned; SSp-tr, Primary somatosensory area, trunk; SSs,
Supplemental somatosensory area; TEa, Temporal association area; tTa, Tetracycline trans activator;
TVA, Receptor for avian leukosis virus; VISa, Anterior area secondary visual cortex; VISal,
Anterolateral secondary visual cortex; VISam, Anteromedial secondary visual cortex; VISC, Visceral
area; VISl (LM), Lateral secondary visual cortex; VISli, Latero intermediate secondary visual cortex;
VISp, Primary visual cortex; VISpl, Posterolateral secondary visual cortex; VISpm, Posteromedial
secondary visual cortex; VISpor, Postrhinal secondary visual cortex; VISrl, Rostrolateral secondary visual
cortex.

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Figure 1

Figure 2

A

Axonal target-dependent

VISpm or ACA input

VISp input

VISl | FB | FF | VS.

Model 1

Relaying information-dependent

context inputs (VISpm, HCtx, LP)

sensory inputs (VISp, LGd)

FB | FF | VS.

Model 2

Inputs are common

FB | FF

Common Inputs

Model 3

B Projection- and layer- specific long-range input tracing
SepW1-Cre (L2/3) or Tlx3-Cre (L5 CCPNs)

ACA
VISpm
VISl → VISp
AAVretro-tTA
AAV8-TRE-DIO-oG/eGFP-T2A-TVA

14d

ACA
VISpm
VISl → VISp
EnvA+RVdG-mCherry

7d → Brain Harvest

C
AAVretro-tTA inj. site

VISl → VISpm : VISpm
VISl → VISp : VISp
VISl → ACA : ACA

D VISl → VISp (FB)

L2/3: SepW1-Cre

L2/3

TVA (eGFP) | RV*dG*-mCherry | Starter neuron

VISl → VISpm (FF)

L2/3

VISl → ACA (FF)

L5 CCPNs: Tlx3-Cre

L5

L5

L5

100μm

Figure 3

Figure 4

A

L2/3: SepW1-Cre VISl→VISpm (FF)   L2/3: SepW1-Cre VISl→VISp (FB)

DAPI
RV*dG*-mCherry

LGd   LGd   LP   LP

100μm

B

Proportion of thalamic input

Starter neurons
L2/3 VISl→VISpm (FF)
L2/3 VISl→VISp (FB)
L5 VISl→VISpm (FF)
L5 VISl→VISp (FB)

LGd   LD   LP

Column groups: **Raw counts in each brain area** (VISp … ENTm) · **Proportion of ipsilateral cortical inputs** (VISp … ENTm) · raw counts in each thalamic area (LGd, LD, LP) · **Proportion of thalamic inputs** (LGd, LD, LP)

Experiment	Mouse ID	VISp	AUDp	SSp-n	AUDv	SSp-ll	AUDd	SSp-un	SSp-ul	SSp-m	SSp-bfd	SSs	VISrl	RSPd	MOp	VISpl	RSPagl	RSPv	VISal	VISpm	SSp-tr	ORBl	AUDpo	VISpor	ACAv	VISam	VISa	ECT	MOs	PERI	TEa	Alp	GU	VISC	ACAd	ENTl	ENTm	VISp%	AUDp%	SSp-n%	AUDv%	SSp-ll%	AUDd%	SSp-un%	SSp-ul%	SSp-m%	SSp-bfd%	SSs%	VISrl%	RSPd%	MOp%	VISpl%	RSPagl%	RSPv%	VISal%	VISpm%	SSp-tr%	ORBl%	AUDpo%	VISpor%	ACAv%	VISam%	VISa%	ECT%	MOs%	PERI%	TEa%	Alp%	GU%	VISC%	ACAd%	ENTl%	ENTm%	LGd	LD	LP	LGd%	LD%	LP%
L2/3 VISl-VISpm	326	660	129	1	32	12	151	16	13	0	144	103	69	16	11	3	14	5	40	161	102	3	78	31	2	23	183	2	17	0	18	0	2	4	15	18	3	31.75%	6.20%	0.05%	1.54%	0.58%	7.26%	0.77%	0.63%	0.00%	6.93%	4.95%	3.32%	0.77%	0.53%	0.14%	0.67%	0.24%	1.92%	7.74%	4.91%	0.14%	3.75%	1.49%	0.10%	1.11%	8.80%	0.08%	0.82%	0.00%	0.87%	0.00%	0.10%	0.19%	0.72%	0.87%	0.14%	4	1	41	8.70%	2.17%	89.13%
L2/3 VISl-VISpm	327	1038	184	1	21	1	55	4	3	2	98	26	140	50	2	14	30	7	72	128	7	1	64	61	0	42	55	4	17	0	77	2	0	1	7	5	15	46.55%	8.25%	0.04%	0.94%	0.04%	2.47%	0.18%	0.13%	0.09%	4.39%	1.17%	6.28%	2.24%	0.09%	0.63%	1.35%	0.31%	3.23%	5.74%	0.31%	0.04%	2.87%	2.74%	0.00%	1.88%	2.47%	0.14%	0.76%	0.00%	3.45%	0.09%	0.00%	0.04%	0.31%	0.22%	0.67%	9	1	73	10.84%	1.20%	87.95%
L2/3 VISl-VISpm	328	193	15	0	0	0	13	0	0	0	17	6	46	1	0	0	8	5	33	32	1	0	6	3	1	15	4	1	9	2	19	1	0	0	2	1	0	44.57%	3.46%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	3.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	3.93%	1.39%	10.62%	0.23%	0.00%	0.00%	1.85%	1.15%	7.62%	7.39%	0.23%	0.00%	1.39%	0.69%	0.23%	3.46%	0.92%	0.14%	2.08%	0.46%	4.39%	0.23%	0.00%	0.00%	0.46%	0.23%	0.00%	1	0	8	11.11%	0.00%	88.89%
L2/3 VISl-VISp	60	94	23	0	3	0	14	0	0	0	14	2	14	1	0	1	2	0	11	11	1	0	15	4	0	8	12	1	0	0	10	0	0	0	1	6	5	37.30%	9.13%	0.00%	1.19%	0.00%	5.56%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	5.56%	0.79%	5.56%	0.40%	0.00%	0.40%	0.79%	0.00%	4.37%	4.37%	0.40%	0.00%	5.95%	1.59%	0.00%	3.17%	4.76%	0.19%	0.00%	0.00%	3.97%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.40%	2.38%	1.98%	1	0	5	16.67%	0.00%	83.33%
L2/3 VISl-VISp	161	403	54	0	18	0	27	0	1	0	30	11	32	31	0	22	26	14	36	32	2	0	16	27	0	12	15	8	0	1	64	3	0	12	0	22	3	44.09%	5.91%	0.00%	1.97%	0.00%	2.95%	0.00%	0.11%	0.00%	3.28%	1.20%	3.50%	3.39%	0.00%	2.41%	2.84%	1.53%	3.94%	3.50%	0.22%	0.00%	1.75%	2.95%	0.00%	1.31%	1.64%	0.43%	0.00%	0.11%	7.00%	0.33%	0.00%	1.31%	0.00%	2.41%	0.33%	30	2	58	33.33%	2.22%	64.44%
L2/3 VISl-VISp	329	1191	238	0	41	5	161	0	7	0	256	74	307	93	9	31	58	49	19	175	58	9	60	18	2	264	299	3	49	1	36	2	1	1	49	5	11	33.28%	6.65%	0.00%	1.15%	0.14%	4.50%	0.00%	0.20%	0.00%	7.15%	2.07%	8.58%	2.60%	0.25%	0.87%	1.62%	1.37%	0.53%	4.89%	1.62%	0.25%	1.68%	0.50%	0.06%	7.38%	8.35%	0.07%	1.37%	0.03%	1.01%	0.06%	0.03%	0.03%	1.37%	0.14%	0.31%	17	12	137	10.24%	7.23%	82.53%
L5 VISl-VISpm	67	76	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	5	7	10	0	0	5	5	7	2	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	1	1	1	1	2	0	3	0	10	2	53.52%	0.00%	0.70%	0.00%	0.70%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	3.52%	4.93%	7.04%	0.00%	0.00%	3.52%	3.52%	4.93%	1.41%	0.00%	0.00%	1.41%	0.00%	0.00%	1.41%	0.00%	0.36%	0.70%	0.00%	0.70%	1.41%	0.00%	2.11%	0.00%	7.04%	1.41%	3	0	6	33.33%	0.00%	66.67%
L5 VISl-VISpm	118	290	7	0	2	1	14	1	2	0	18	0	27	29	0	3	45	10	18	21	2	0	3	60	0	27	4	0	0	29	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	47.08%	1.14%	0.00%	0.32%	0.16%	2.27%	0.16%	0.32%	0.00%	2.92%	0.00%	4.38%	4.71%	0.00%	0.49%	7.31%	1.62%	2.92%	3.41%	0.32%	0.00%	0.49%	9.74%	0.00%	4.38%	0.65%	0.00%	0.00%	4.71%	0.32%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.16%	23	3	59	27.06%	3.53%	69.41%
L5 VISl-VISpm	143	601	12	0	10	0	10	3	1	0	28	22	42	60	0	16	54	63	61	25	7	0	10	44	0	24	55	0	0	86	1	0	3	0	4	4	0	48.23%	0.96%	0.00%	0.80%	0.00%	0.80%	0.24%	0.08%	0.00%	2.25%	1.77%	3.37%	4.82%	0.00%	1.28%	4.33%	5.06%	4.90%	2.01%	0.56%	0.00%	0.80%	3.53%	0.00%	1.93%	4.41%	0.00%	0.00%	6.90%	0.08%	0.00%	0.24%	0.00%	0.32%	0.32%	0.00%	46	3	77	36.51%	2.38%	61.11%
L5 VISl-VISp	63	226	4	7	8	4	3	0	0	0	13	9	22	20	0	4	10	6	30	14	5	0	1	9	2	6	2	0	0	0	2	0	1	2	4	0	0	54.59%	0.97%	1.69%	1.93%	0.97%	0.72%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	3.14%	2.17%	5.31%	4.83%	0.00%	0.97%	2.42%	1.45%	7.25%	3.38%	1.21%	0.00%	0.24%	2.17%	0.48%	1.45%	0.48%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.48%	0.00%	0.24%	0.48%	0.97%	0.00%	0.00%	5	1	21	18.52%	3.70%	77.78%
L5 VISl-VISp	64	646	32	0	10	0	2	0	0	0	17	4	40	21	0	22	5	10	30	23	3	0	57	29	0	15	7	3	0	1	63	0	0	0	0	2	2	62.06%	3.07%	0.00%	0.96%	0.00%	0.19%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	1.63%	0.38%	3.84%	2.11%	0.00%	2.11%	0.48%	0.96%	2.88%	2.21%	0.29%	0.00%	5.48%	2.79%	0.00%	1.44%	0.67%	0.13%	0.00%	0.10%	6.05%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.19%	0.19%	17	3	101	14.05%	2.48%	83.47%
L5 VISl-VISp	122	308	12	1	2	3	2	0	0	0	9	2	34	7	0	32	7	6	22	15	1	0	10	39	0	1	0	0	0	1	10	0	0	1	0	3	0	58.44%	2.28%	0.19%	0.38%	0.57%	0.38%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	1.71%	0.38%	6.45%	1.33%	0.00%	6.07%	1.33%	1.14%	4.17%	2.85%	0.19%	0.00%	1.90%	7.40%	0.00%	0.19%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.19%	1.90%	0.00%	0.00%	0.19%	0.00%	0.57%	0.00%	13	0	23	36.11%	0.00%	63.89%
L5 VISl-ACA	325	320	20	0	0	0	14	0	0	0	24	16	42	34	0	4	41	3	12	25	4	0	2	14	0	12	14	0	0	0	11	0	0	0	0	3	2	51.86%	3.24%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	2.27%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	3.89%	2.59%	6.81%	5.51%	0.00%	0.65%	6.65%	0.49%	1.94%	4.05%	0.65%	0.00%	0.32%	2.27%	0.00%	1.94%	2.27%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	1.78%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.49%	0.32%	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
L5 VISl-ACA	356	103	7	0	3	0	1	1	0	0	5	1	9	2	0	0	1	0	41	2	0	0	4	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	19	0	0	1	0	0	1	50.49%	3.43%	0.00%	1.47%	0.00%	0.49%	0.49%	0.00%	0.00%	2.45%	0.49%	4.41%	0.98%	0.00%	0.00%	0.49%	0.00%	20.10%	0.98%	0.00%	0.00%	1.96%	0.98%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.49%	0.00%	9.31%	0.00%	0.00%	0.49%	0.00%	0.00%	0.49%	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
L5 VISl-ACA	396	164	35	0	67	0	18	0	0	0	12	23	21	11	0	0	4	9	0	6	0	0	14	17	0	16	15	38	0	14	79	0	0	0	0	12	5	30.26%	6.46%	0.00%	12.36%	0.00%	3.32%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	2.21%	4.24%	3.87%	2.03%	0.00%	0.00%	0.74%	1.66%	0.00%	1.11%	0.00%	0.00%	2.58%	3.14%	0.00%	2.95%	2.77%	7.01%	0.00%	2.58%	14.58%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	2.21%	0.92%	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

Experiment	Mouse ID	Sex	Strain	From	Projection	Mouse age (P) at virus #1/#2 injection	Virus #1a (oG) and #1b (TVA)	Virus #1a (oG) titer	Virus #1b (TVA) titer	Virus #2 AAVretro	Virus #2 titer	Mouse age (P) at virus #3 injection	Virus #3 (rabies)	Virus #3 titer	Total virus/tracer incubation time (day)
FF/FB identity: Triple AAV	376	M	C57	VISl	ACA, VISp, VISpm	95	100 nl of scAAVretro-hSyn-H2B-eGFP into ACA, 100 nl of scAAVretro-hSyn-H2B-mCherry into VISp, 100 nl of AAVretro-BFP into VISpm	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	18
FF/FB identity: Triple AAV	414	F	C57	VISl	ACA, VISp, VISpm	89	50 nl of scAAVretro-hSyn-H2B-eGFP into ACA, 50 nl of scAAVretro-hSyn-H2B-mCherry into VISp, 50 nl of AAVretro-BFP into VISpm	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	21
FF/FB identity: Triple AAV	415	F	C57	VISl	ACA, VISp, VISpm	89	50 nl of scAAVretro-hSyn-H2B-eGFP into VISp, 50 nl of scAAVretro-hSyn-H2B-mCherry into VISpm, 50 nl of AAVretro-BFP into ACA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	21
FF/FB Identity: Double CTB	378	F	C57	VISl	VISpm, VISp	113	100 nl of CTB-647 in VISpm, 100 nl of CTB-555 in VISp	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	4
FF/FB Identity: Double CTB	124	F	Tlx3-Cre	VISl	VISpm, VISp	104	50 nl of CTB-555 in VISpm, 50 nl of CTB-647 in VISp	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	3
FF/FB Identity: Triple CTB	375	M	C57	VISl	ACA, VISp, VISpm	95	100 nl of CTB-647 in VISpm, 100 nl of CTB-555 in ACA, 100 nl of CTB-488 in VISp	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	4
FF/FB Identity: Triple CTB	353	M	SepW1-Cre	VISl	ACA, VISp, VISpm	72	50 nl of CTB-647 in VISpm, 50 nl of CTB-555 in VISp, 50 nl of CTB-488 in ACA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	4
FF/FB Identity: Triple CTB	354	M	SepW1-Cre	VISl	ACA, VISp, VISpm	72	50 nl of CTB-555 in VISpm, 50 nl of CTB-488 in VISp, 50 nl of CTB-647 in ACA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	4
Control: No G-protein test	392	M	Tlx3-Cre	VISl	VISp	91	50 nl mixture of PBS and AAV8-TRE-DIO-eGFP-T2A-TVA into VISl	NA	7.00E+12	50 nl of AAVretro-nEF-lox66/71-tTA	4.86E+13	105	100 nl of EnvA+RVdG-mCherry into VISl	1.43E+10	21
Control: No G-protein test	406	M	Tlx3-Cre	VISl	VISp	139	50 nl mixture of PBS and AAV8-TRE-DIO-eGFP-T2A-TVA into VISl	NA	7.00E+12	50 nl of AAVretro-nEF-lox66/71-tTA	4.86E+13	153	100 nl of EnvA+RVdG-mCherry into VISl	1.43E+10	21
Control: No G-protein test	405	M	Tlx3-Cre	VISl	VISp	139	50 nl mixture of PBS and AAV8-TRE-DIO-eGFP-T2A-TVA into VISl	NA	7.00E+12	50 nl of AAVretro-nEF-lox66/71-tTA	4.86E+13	153	100 nl of EnvA+RVdG-mCherry into VISl	1.43E+10	21
Control: Colocalization AAV retro with CTB	386	F	Tlx3-Cre	VISl	VISp	126	50 nl of AAV8-TRE-DIO-TVA66TeGFP-P2A-oG into VISl. 50 nl of CTB-647 in VISpm, 50 nl of CTB-555 in VISp	7.44E+13	NA	50 nl of AAVretro-nEF-lox66/71-tTA	4.86E+13	126	NA	NA	14
Control: Colocalization AAV retro with CTB	403	F	SepW1-Cre	VISl	VISp	131	50 nl of AAV8-TRE-DIO-TVA66TeGFP-P2A-oG into VISl. 50 nl of CTB-647 in VISpm, 50 nl of CTB-555 in VISp	7.44E+13	NA	50 nl of AAVretro-nEF-lox66/71-tTA	4.86E+13	NA	NA	NA	14
Control: Colocalization AAV retro with CTB	343	F	Tlx3-Cre	VISl	VISpm	149	50 nl mixture of AAV8-TRE-DIO-oG and AAV8-TRE-DIO-GFP-T2A-TVA into VISl. 10 nl of CTB-647 into VISpm	2.36E+13	7.00E+12	50 nl of AAVretro-nEF-lox66/71-tTA	4.86E+13	163	100 nl of EnvA+RVdG-mCherry into VISl	7.71E+08	21
Control: Colocalization AAV retro with CTB	344	F	Tlx3-Cre	VISl	VISpm	140	50 nl mixture of AAV8-TRE-DIO-oG and AAV8-TRE-DIO-GFP-T2A-TVA into VISl. 10 nl of CTB-647 into VISpm	2.36E+13	7.00E+12	50 nl of AAVretro-nEF-lox66/71-tTA	4.86E+13	154	100 nl of EnvA+RVdG-mCherry into VISl	7.71E+08	21
Control: No TTA test	94	M	Tlx3-Cre	VISl	NA	337	50 nl of AAV8-TRE-DIO-TVA66TeGFP-P2A-oG into VISl	7.44E+13	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	21
Control: No TTA test	425	F	Tlx3-Cre	VISl	NA	74	50 nl of AAV8-TRE-DIO-TVA66TeGFP-P2A-oG into VISl	7.44E+13	7.44E+13	NA	NA	84	100 nl of EnvA+RVdG-mCherry into VISl	7.11E+09	21
Control: No TTA test	427	F	SepW1-Cre	Vis	NA	63	50 nl mixture of AAV8-TRE-DIO-oG and AAV8-TRE-DIO-GFP-T2A-TVA	1.41E+14	7.00E+12	NA	NA	77	100 nl of EnvA+RVdG-mCherry into VISl	7.11E+09	21
Control: No TTA test	428	F	SepW1-Cre	Vis	NA	63	50 nl mixture of AAV8-TRE-DIO-oG and AAV8-TRE-DIO-GFP-T2A-TVA	1.41E+14	7.00E+12	NA	NA	77	100 nl of EnvA+RVdG-mCherry into VISl	7.11E+09	21
Control: No TTA test	429	F	Tlx3-Cre	VISl	NA	51	50 nl of AAV8-TRE-DIO-TVA66TeGFP-P2A-oG into VISl	7.44E+13	7.44E+13	NA	NA	65	100 nl of EnvA+RVdG-mCherry into VISl	7.11E+09	21
Control: No TTA test	432	F	Tlx3-Cre	VISl	NA	49	50 nl of AAV8-TRE-DIO-TVA66TeGFP-P2A-oG into VISl	7.44E+13	7.44E+13	NA	NA	63	100 nl of EnvA+RVdG-mCherry into VISl	7.11E+09	21
Rabies: L2/3 VISl-VISpm	326	M	SepW1-Cre	VISl	VISpm	73	50 nl mixture of AAV8-TRE-DIO-oG and AAV8-TRE-DIO-GFP-T2A-TVA into VISl	2.36E+13	7.00E+12	50 nl of AAVretro-nEF-lox66/71-tTA	4.86E+13	87	100 nl of EnvA+RVdG-mCherry into VISl	7.71E+08	21
Rabies: L2/3 VISl-VISpm	327	M	SepW1-Cre	VISl	VISpm	73	50 nl mixture of AAV8-TRE-DIO-oG and AAV8-TRE-DIO-GFP-T2A-TVA into VISl	2.36E+13	7.00E+12	50 nl of AAVretro-nEF-lox66/71-tTA	4.86E+13	87	100 nl of EnvA+RVdG-mCherry into VISl	7.71E+08	21
Rabies: L2/3 VISl-VISpm	328	M	SepW1-Cre	VISl	VISpm	73	50 nl mixture of AAV8-TRE-DIO-oG and AAV8-TRE-DIO-GFP-T2A-TVA into VISl	2.36E+13	7.00E+12	50 nl of AAVretro-nEF-lox66/71-tTA	4.86E+13	87	100 nl of EnvA+RVdG-mCherry into VISl	7.71E+08	21
Rabies: L2/3 VISl-VISp	329	M	SepW1-Cre	VISl	VISp	68	50 nl mixture of AAV8-TRE-DIO-oG and AAV8-TRE-DIO-GFP-T2A-TVA into VISl	2.36E+13	7.00E+12	50 nl of AAVretro-nEF-lox66/71-tTA	4.86E+13	82	100 nl of EnvA+RVdG-mCherry into VISl	7.71E+08	21
Rabies: L2/3 VISl-VISp	161	F	SepW1-Cre	VISl	VISp	67	50 nl of AAV8-TRE-DIO-oG and AAV8-TRE-DIO-GFP-T2A-TVA	1.41E+14	7.00E+12	50 nl of AAVretro-nEF-lox66/71-tTA	4.86E+13	81	100 nl of EnvA+RVdG-mCherry into VISl	7.71E+08	21
Rabies: L2/3 VISl-VISp	60	F	SepW1-Cre	VISl	VISp	65	50 nl of AAV8-TRE-DIO-TVA66TeGFP-P2A-oG into VISl	7.44E+13	NA	100 nl of AAVretro-nEF-lox66/71-tTA	4.86E+13	79	100 nl of EnvA+RVdG-mCherry into VISl	1.78E+09	21
Rabies: L5 VISl-VISpm	67	F	Tlx3-Cre	VISl	VISpm	69	50 nl of AAV8-TRE-DIO-TVA66TeGFP-P2A-oG into VISl	7.44E+13	NA	50 nl of AAVretro-nEF-lox66/71-tTA	4.86E+13	83	100 nl of EnvA+RVdG-mCherry into VISl	1.07E+09	21
Rabies: L5 VISl-VISpm	143	M	Tlx3-Cre	VISl	VISpm	65	50 nl mixture of AAV8-TRE-DIO-oG and AAV8-TRE-DIO-GFP-T2A-TVA into VISl	1.41E+14	7.00E+12	50 nl of AAVretro-nEF-lox66/71-tTA	4.86E+13	79	100 nl of EnvA+RVdG-mCherry into VISl	7.71E+08	21
Rabies: L5 VISl-VISpm	118	F	Tlx3-Cre	VISl	VISpm	106	50 nl mixture of AAV8-TRE-DIO-oG and AAV8-TRE-DIO-GFP-T2A-TVA into VISl	1.41E+14	7.00E+12	50 nl of AAVretro-nEF-lox66/71-tTA	4.86E+13	120	100 nl of EnvA+RVdG-mCherry into VISl	1.07E+09	21
Rabies: L5 VISl-ACA	325	M	Tlx3-Cre	VISl	ACA	92	50 nl mixture of AAV8-TRE-DIO-oG and AAV8-TRE-DIO-GFP-T2A-TVA into VISl	2.36E+13	7.00E+12	50 nl of AAVretro-nEF-lox66/71-tTA	4.86E+13	106	100 nl of EnvA+RVdG-mCherry into VISl	7.71E+08	21
Rabies: L5 VISl-ACA	356	F	Tlx3-Cre	VISl	ACA	74	50 nl mixture of AAV8-TRE-DIO-oG and AAV8-TRE-DIO-GFP-T2A-TVA into VISl	2.36E+13	7.00E+12	50 nl of AAVretro-nEF-lox66/71-tTA	4.86E+13	89	100 nl of EnvA+RVdG-mCherry into VISl	7.71E+08	21
Rabies: L5 VISl-ACA	396	F	Tlx3-Cre	VISl	ACA	125	50 nl mixture of AAV8-TRE-DIO-oG and AAV8-TRE-DIO-GFP-T2A-TVA into VISl	1.41E+14	7.00E+12	50 nl of AAVretro-nEF-lox66/71-tTA	4.86E+13	139	100 nl of EnvA+RVdG-mCherry into VISl	1.43E+10	21
Rabies: L5 VISl-VISp	122	F	Tlx3-Cre	VISl	VISp	97	50 nl mixture of AAV8-TRE-DIO-oG and AAV8-TRE-DIO-GFP-T2A-TVA into VISl	1.41E+14	7.00E+12	50 nl of AAVretro-nEF-lox66/71-tTA	4.86E+13	111	100 nl of EnvA+RVdG-mCherry into VISl	1.07E+09	21
Rabies: L5 VISl-VISp	63	M	Tlx3-Cre	VISl	VISp	70	50 nl of AAV8-TRE-DIO-TVA66TeGFP-P2A-oG into VISl	7.44E+13	NA	200 nl of AAVretro-nEF-lox66/71-tTA	4.86E+13	84	100 nl of EnvA+RVdG-mCherry into VISl	1.78E+09	21
Rabies: L5 VISl-VISp	64	F	Tlx3-Cre	VISl	VISp	71	50 nl of AAV8-TRE-DIO-TVA66TeGFP-P2A-oG into VISl	7.44E+13	NA	100 nl of AAVretro-nEF-lox66/71-tTA	4.86E+13	85	100 nl of EnvA+RVdG-mCherry into VISl	1.07E+09	21