

Criminal Justice Data Brief

Firearm Registrations in Hawaii, 2003

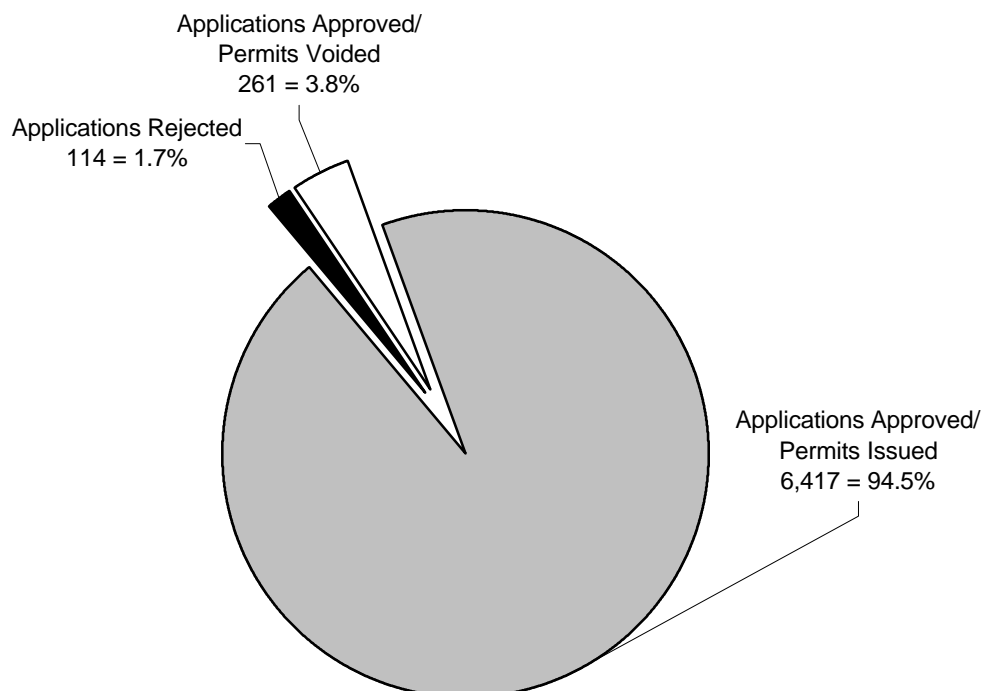
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Hawaii Revised Statutes §134-14 requires the county police departments to provide to the Department of the Attorney General a monthly report of firearm registration activity. These data were compiled in order to provide the statistics reported herein for Calendar Year 2003. This is the fourth annual publication of this report.

Permit Applications Processed, Issued, Voided, and Rejected

A total of 6,792 personal/private firearm permit applications were processed statewide during 2003, marking a 2.8% decrease from the 6,990 applications processed in 2002. Of the applications processed in 2003, 94.5% (6,417) were approved and resulted in issued permits; 3.8% (261) were approved but subsequently voided after the applicants failed to return for their permits within a specified time period; and 1.7% (114) were rejected due to one or more disqualifying factors (rejections are described in detail beginning on page 4). The proportion of rejections increased slightly in 2003, up from 1.5% reported for 2002.

Figure 1: Firearm Permit Application Outcomes, State of Hawaii, 2003



Registrations and Importations

The 6,417 permits issued in 2003 cover a total of 14,924 firearms registered. Over half (54.6%, or 8,146) of these firearms were accounted for by in-state transfers (i.e., firearms that were already in Hawaii), with the remainder (45.4%, or 6,778) comprised of firearms that were imported from out of state. Firearms may be imported to Hawaii by federally licensed dealers and collectors, state residents returning from travel, individuals who have relocated to Hawaii, or those who visit Hawaii for certain purposes (e.g., hunting, competition, filmmaking). Although there is no way to track the number of firearms that permanently leave the state, informal estimates from both this Department and the Honolulu Police Department place the number of privately owned firearms in Hawaii at somewhere over one million.

Permits and Registrations by Firearm Type

In Hawaii, annual permits are issued in order to acquire an unlimited number of longarms (rifles or shotguns), while one-time permits are issued to acquire specific handguns. By firearm type, over half (54.6%, or 3,504) of the total permits issued during 2003 were annual longarm permits, while 45.4% (2,913) were permits to acquire handguns. The tally of handgun permits is confounded, however, as two of the county police departments issue a single permit listing all handguns that will be acquired simultaneously from the same source (i.e., one permit per transaction, per HRS §134-2(e)), while the other two departments issue one permit per handgun even if they are acquired in the same transaction.

Longarms accounted for 58.7% (8,765) of all firearms registered in 2003. Broken out further, rifles and shotguns comprised 41.3% (6,167) and 17.3% (2,589) of total registrations, respectively. The remaining 41.3% (6,168) of registered firearms were handguns.

County Comparison

Table 1 shows the distribution of firearm registration activity during 2003 across the four counties and for the State of Hawaii.

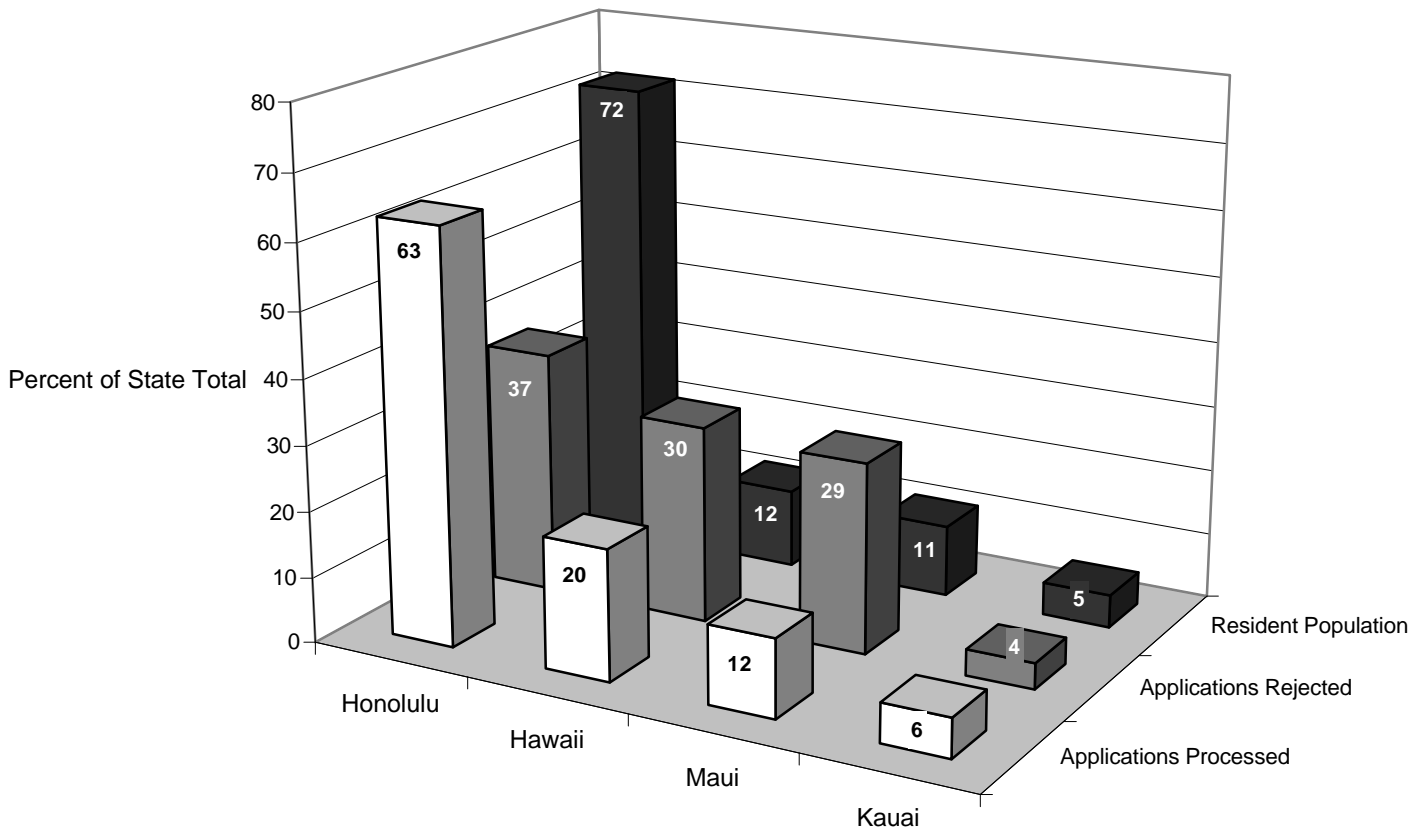
Table 1: Firearm Registration Activity, State of Hawaii and Counties, 2003

	C&C of Honolulu	Hawaii County	Maui County	Kauai County	State Total
Applications Processed	4,248	1,381	784	379	6,792
Applications Approved/Permits Issued	3,986	1,333	724	374	6,417
Applications Approved/Permits Voided	220	14	27	0	261
Applications Rejected	42	34	33	5	114
Rejection Rate	1.0%	2.5%	4.2%	1.3%	1.7%
Firearms Registered	9,079	3,290	1,700	855	14,924
Firearms Imported	4,360	1,376	699	343	6,778

As compared to Hawaii’s resident population distribution, firearm registration activity occurred disproportionately across the four counties during 2003 (Figure 2). (If the counties’ firearm registration activity occurred proportionately to their respective population sizes, then the three bars depicted for each county in Figure 2 would be of equal height.)

Based on its population size, 13% fewer permit applications were processed in the City & County of Honolulu than would be expected, and 49% fewer rejections were reported. Hawaii County recorded a 67% larger-than-expected share of processed applications and a 150% larger portion of rejections. Maui County processed applications proportionately to its population size, but its share of rejections was 164% larger than expected. Kauai County reported slightly more processed applications and slightly fewer rejections than would be anticipated based on population size.

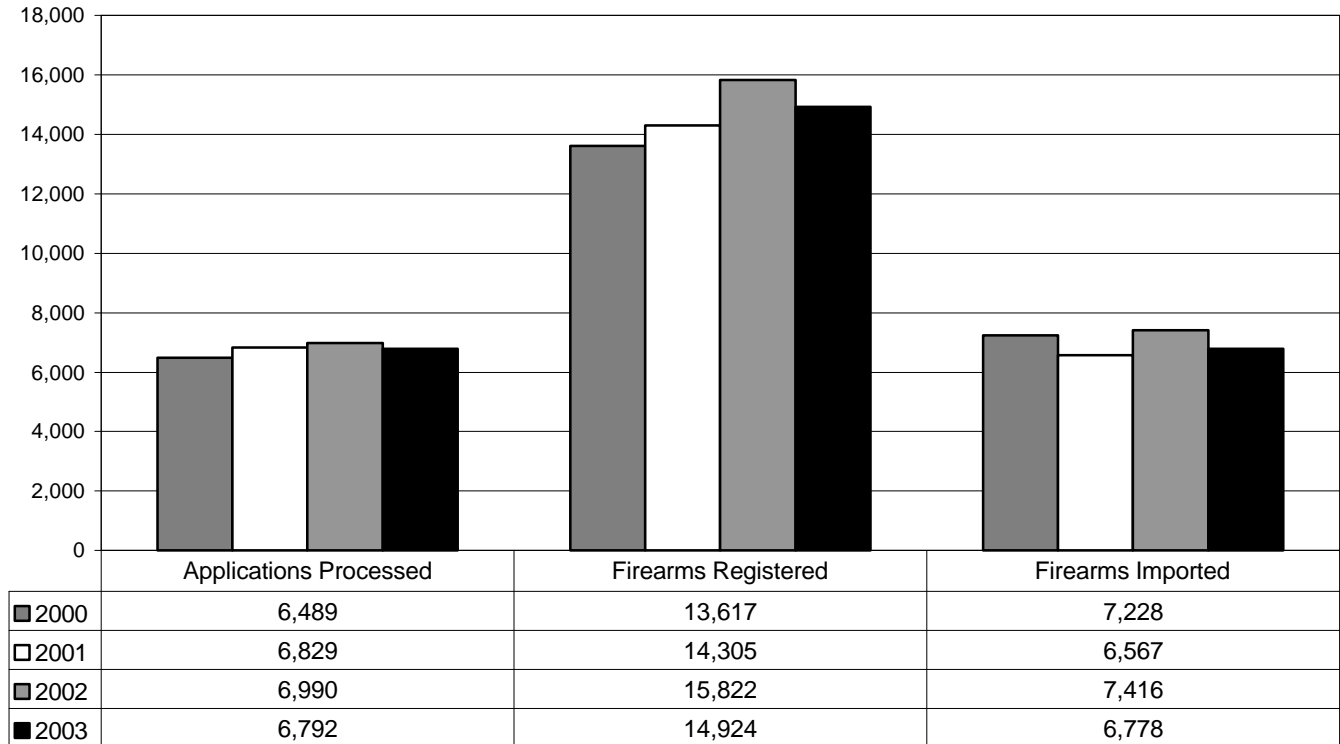
Figure 2: County Distribution of Permit Applications Processed and Rejected (2003) versus Resident Population Distribution (2002)



Registration Activity Over Time

On the whole, firearm registration activity has increased slightly over the four-year period that these data have been systematically compiled and reported (Figure 3). From 2000 to 2003, the number of processed applications increased 4.7% and the number of firearms registered rose 9.6%, while the number of firearms imported decreased 6.3%.

Figure 3: Firearm Registration Trends, State of Hawaii, 2000-2003



Rejections

As noted earlier, 1.7% (114) of all permit applications in Hawaii during 2003 were rejected for cause. Hawaii's rejection rate compares favorably with the 2.1% figure reported for all state and local agencies conducting background checks for firearm permits and transfers in 2002 (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2003). That Hawaii's rejection rate is lower than the most recent national figure is especially noteworthy when Hawaii's comparatively exhaustive background check procedures and extensive list of disqualifying factors are taken into consideration.

Following a trend since the first of these reports was published in 2000, longarm permit applications in Hawaii in 2003 were rejected at a rate that is several times higher than the rejection rate for handgun permit applications (2.4% for longarm permit applications versus 0.7% for handgun permit applications).

Up from 24.3% (25 of 103) in 2002, 36.8% (42 of 114) of the rejections in 2003 were due to applicants' prior criminal convictions, while 2.6% (3) were due to pending cases. However, the majority (60.5%, or 69) of rejections in 2003 were not based on the criminal histories of the applicants.

It is a misdemeanor in Hawaii to provide false information on firearm permit applications, unless the falsified information pertains to criminal or mental health histories, in which case it is a felony offense (HRS §134-17). In 2003, falsified criminal or mental health information was provided in 71.9% (82) of the 114 rejection cases; falsified information *not* pertaining to criminal or mental health histories was provided in 3.5% (4); and no false information was provided in 24.6% (28) of the cases.

Table 2 presents broad categorical data on the reasons for rejected permit applications.

Table 2: Reasons for Rejecting Firearm Permit Applications, State of Hawaii, 2003

	Number	Percent*
Mental Health Issues/Treatment	52	45.6
"Other" Offense	25	21.9
Domestic Violence Offense	19	16.7
Other (e.g., non-U.S. citizen)	11	9.6
Drug Offense	5	4.4
Temporary Restraining Order	4	3.5

*Figures do not total 100% due to multiple disqualifying factors for a small number of applicants.

It should be noted that rejections for mental health issues, which comprise the largest portion of rejections, can be satisfactorily resolved with a doctor's note stating that the applicant is no longer adversely affected. (In many cases, an applicant may have received short-term mental health services sometime in the distant past.) While an original rejection cannot be overturned, a new application may be submitted and the appropriate permit will be issued. It is unknown how many applicants who are initially rejected for mental health reasons successfully reapply for permits.

Table 3 (next page) provides a breakdown of data entered into a description field for each rejection. These data have been edited slightly so as to add consistency to the open text written by police personnel.

The most common specific reason for rejections in 2003 was, by far, a court-ordered alcohol abuse assessment following a conviction for driving under the influence, which the police departments interpret as a form of mental health treatment and thus grounds for rejection (a DUI conviction is not in and of itself a disqualifying factor). These cases comprised 15.8% (18) of all rejections. As these applicants may not have conceptualized an assessment of their alcohol use as constituting "mental health treatment," it is perhaps not surprising that all 18 of these rejections involved falsified information pertaining to (criminal and/or) mental health histories.

**Table 3: Descriptions of Firearm Permit Application Rejections,
State of Hawaii, 2003**

	Number	Percent*
abuse of family/household member	10	8.8
abuse of family/household member (arrest only; no case pending)	1	.9
abuse of family/household member, warrant	1	.9
abuse x 2, terroristic threatening, alcohol abuse assessment	1	.9
adjustment disorder and depression	1	.9
admitted to mental health facility	1	.9
alcohol abuse assessment following DUI conviction	18	15.8
alcohol abuse issue (unspecified)	1	.9
alcohol abuse treatment	1	.9
applicant lives with an unqualified person	2	1.8
assault	10	8.8
assault, abuse of family/household member	3	2.6
assault, harassment x 2	1	.9
attempted suicide	1	.9
bipolar disorder	1	.9
burglary	4	3.5
confusion regarding pardoned conviction; possible erroneous rejection	1	.9
deferred acceptance of no contest plea for terroristic threatening charge	1	.9
depression	3	2.6
depression, anxiety, and narcissistic traits	1	.9
disorderly conduct	2	1.8
disturbing the peace	1	.9
doctor's recommendation (unspecified)	8	7.0
drug offense	2	1.8
felony conviction in Philadelphia	1	.9
fighting in public place	1	.9
harassment	2	1.8
mental health clearance needed	1	.9
mental health issue (unspecified)	3	2.6
mental health medication	4	3.5
mental health treatment (unspecified)	5	4.4
mental health treatment (assessment only)	1	.9
pardoned conviction did not include restoration of firearm rights	1	.9
pending abuse of family/household member case	1	.9
pending terroristic threatening case	1	.9
pending theft case	1	.9
schizophrenia	2	1.8
substance abuse treatment	1	.9
temporary restraining order	4	3.5
terroristic threatening	1	.9
theft	2	1.8
unspecified	1	.9
wanted fugitive	2	1.8
warrant in California	1	.9
warrants	1	.9
warrants in South Carolina	1	.9

*Figures do not total 100% due to rounding.

Confiscations

Although a few prohibited firearms (e.g., machineguns, “sawed-off” shotguns) are usually confiscated by registration personnel each year, none were reported in 2003.

Licenses to Carry

The county police departments also process license applications for the open and/or concealed carry of firearms in public. During 2003, 249 employees of security firms were issued carry licenses and seven (2.8%) were rejected due to disqualifying factors. One private citizen also applied for a carry license and was denied at the sole discretion of the police chief.

Project Safe Neighborhoods

The Research & Statistics Branch is assisting the U.S. Attorney in Hawaii as its federally-designated “Research Partner” in Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN), a nationwide initiative to vigorously prosecute federal firearms offenses and, through public outreach efforts, prevent the commission of these crimes. An adjunct purpose of this annual firearm registration report is to support the PSN effort in Hawaii.

Acknowledgements

This report was prepared with the input and assistance of the county police departments’ firearm registration personnel: **Debra Agena**, Records Clerk, Maui County Police Department; **Sergeant Crizalmer Caraang** and the firearm registration section of the Records and Identification Division, City & County of Honolulu Police Department; **Sharen Chaves**, Records Clerk, Hawaii County Police Department; and **Emily Fabro**, Firearms Clerk, Kauai County Police Department. As the volume of registration activity documented in this report demonstrates, these dedicated professionals work hard to serve the citizens of Hawaii.

Reference

Bureau of Justice Statistics (September, 2003). *Background checks for firearms transfers, 2002*. Publication NCJ 200116. U.S. Department of Justice: Office of Justice Programs.



www.psn.gov

*This report can be downloaded in PDF format from the
Crime Prevention & Justice Assistance Division web site:*

cpja.ag.state.hi.us

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