

# Criminal Justice Data Brief

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## *Firearm Registrations in Hawaii, 2007*

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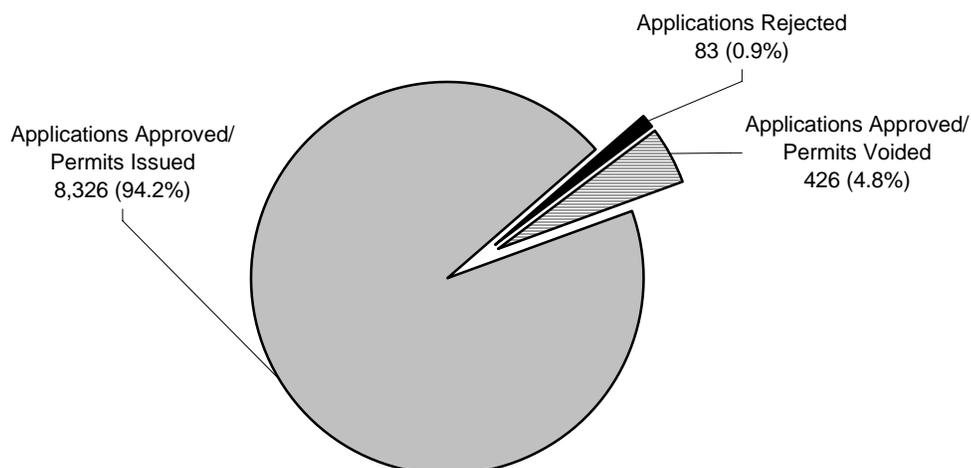
Hawaii Revised Statutes §134-14 requires the county police departments to provide to the Department of the Attorney General a monthly report of firearm registration activity. The data from these reports were compiled in order to provide the statistics presented herein for Calendar Year 2007. This is the eighth annual publication of *Firearm Registrations in Hawaii*.

### **Permit Applications Processed, Issued, Voided, and Rejected**

A record high total of 8,835 personal/private firearm permit applications were processed statewide during 2007, marking a 9.8% increase from the 8,049 applications processed in 2006. Of the applications processed in 2007, 94.2% were approved and resulted in issued permits; a record high of 4.8% were approved but subsequently voided after the applicants failed to return for their permits within a specified time period; and a record low of 0.9% were rejected due to one or more disqualifying factors. Figure 1 reveals additional information. Rejections are described in greater detail throughout this report.

**Figure 1: Firearm Permit Application Outcomes,  
State of Hawaii, 2007**

(N = 8,835 Total Applications Processed)



## Registrations and Importations

The 8,326 permits issued statewide in 2007 cover a record high total of 21,784 firearms registered. Just under half (10,401, or 47.7%) of the firearms registered during 2007 were imported from out-of-state, with the remainder (11,383, or 52.3%) accounted for by in-state transfers (i.e., firearms that were already in Hawaii). Although there is no way to track the number of firearms that permanently leave the state, independent estimates from the Department of the Attorney General and the City & County of Honolulu Police Department place the total number of privately owned firearms in Hawaii at roughly one million.

## Permits and Registrations by Firearm Type

In the State of Hawaii, annual permits are issued in order to acquire an unlimited number of longarms (rifles and shotguns), while one-time permits are issued to acquire specific handguns. By firearm type, a record high of 57.0% (4,745) of the total permits issued during 2007 were to acquire longarms, while a record low of 43.0% (3,581) were handgun permits. The tally of handgun permits is perennially confounded, however, as some 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 departments issue one permit per handgun even if they are acquired in the same transaction.

Longarms accounted for a record high of 62.2% (13,550) of all firearms registered in 2007. Broken out further, rifles and shotguns comprised 46.7% (10,183) and 15.5% (3,367) of total registrations, respectively. The remaining, record low 37.8% (8,234) of registered firearms were handguns.

## County Comparisons and Registration Trends

Table 1 shows the distribution of firearm registration activity during 2007 across the four counties and for the State of Hawaii overall.

**Table 1: Firearm Registration Activity,  
State of Hawaii and Counties, 2007**

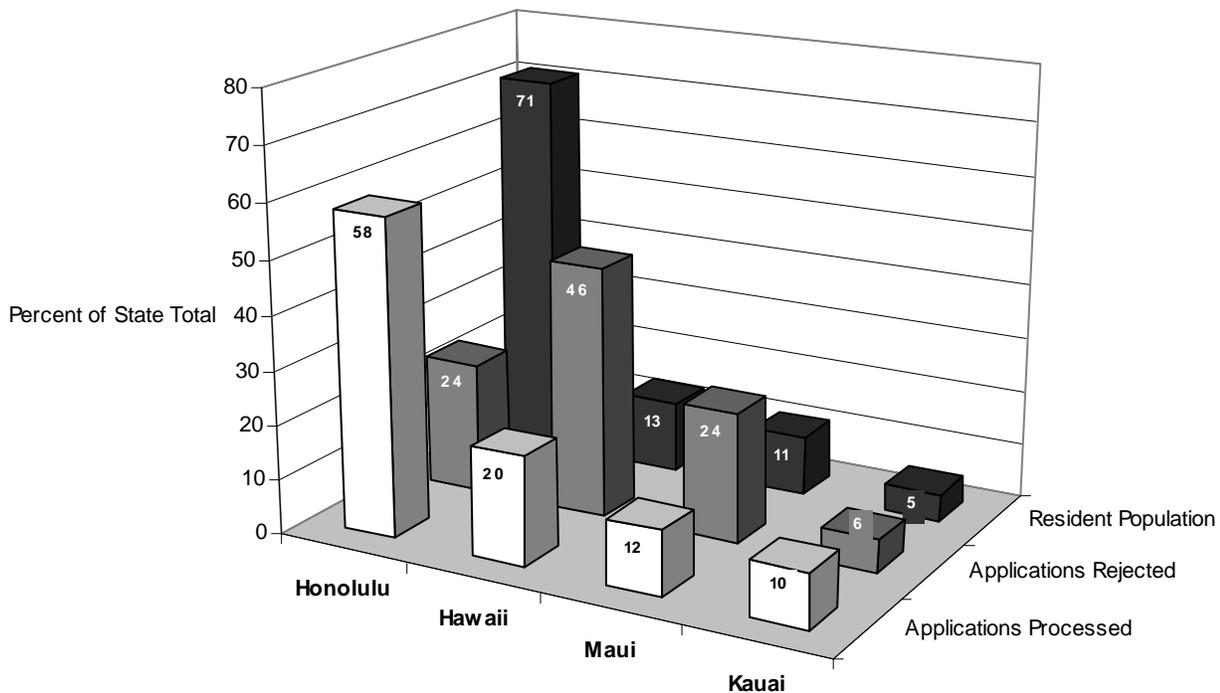
	C&C of Honolulu	Hawaii County	Maui County	Kauai County	State Total
Applications Processed	5,120	1,794	1,018	903	<b>8,835</b>
Applications Approved/ Permits Issued	4,859	1,724	969	774	<b>8,326</b>
Applications Approved/ Permits Voided	241	32	29	124	<b>426</b>
Applications Rejected	20	38	20	5	<b>83</b>
Rejection Rate	0.4%	2.1%	2.0%	0.6%	<b>0.9%</b>
Firearms Registered	13,641	4,377	2,251	1,515	<b>21,784</b>
Firearms Imported	7,069	1,813	972	547	<b>10,401</b>

As compared to Hawaii's resident population distribution, firearm registration activity occurred disproportionately across the four counties during 2007 (see Figure 2). (If the counties' registration activity occurred in equal proportion to their respective population sizes, then the three bars depicted for each county in Figure 2 would be of equal height and value.)

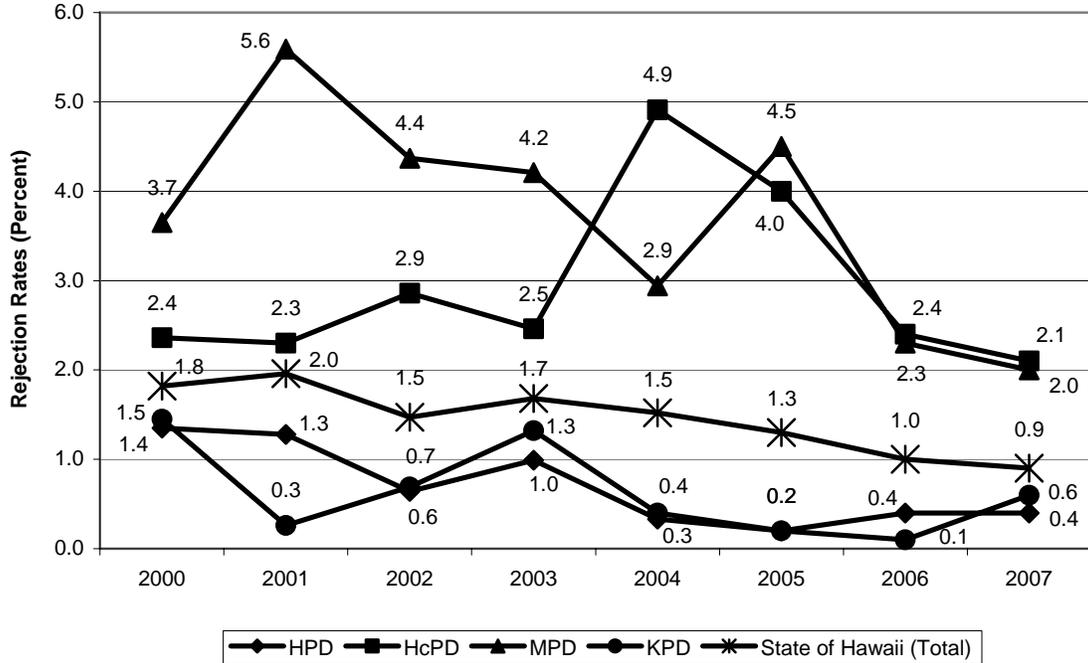
Based on its population size, 18% fewer permit applications were processed in the City & County of Honolulu during 2007 than would be expected, and 66% fewer rejections were reported. Hawaii County recorded a 54% larger-than-expected share of processed applications and a 354% larger portion of rejections. Maui County processed applications in rough proportion to its population size, but its share of rejections was 218% larger than expected. Kauai County processed 200% more applications than would be anticipated based on its population size, while its share of rejections was roughly equal to expectations.

A possible explanation for the county-level disparities in rejection rates (also see Figure 3, next page) is that the police departments vary in their use of interpretation and discretion when determining if certain permit applications should be rejected based on suspected, investigated, and/or alleged prior legal transgressions that did not involve criminal convictions, and in determining what does or does not constitute a "crime of violence" (e.g., disorderly conduct) or "mental health treatment" (see the first footnote below Table 3 on page 6). It has also been suggested by police personnel that changes in policies and procedures pertaining to rejections are sometimes related to the assignment of new Records Division supervisors.

**Figure 2: County Distribution of Permit Applications Processed and Rejected versus Resident Population Distribution, 2007**

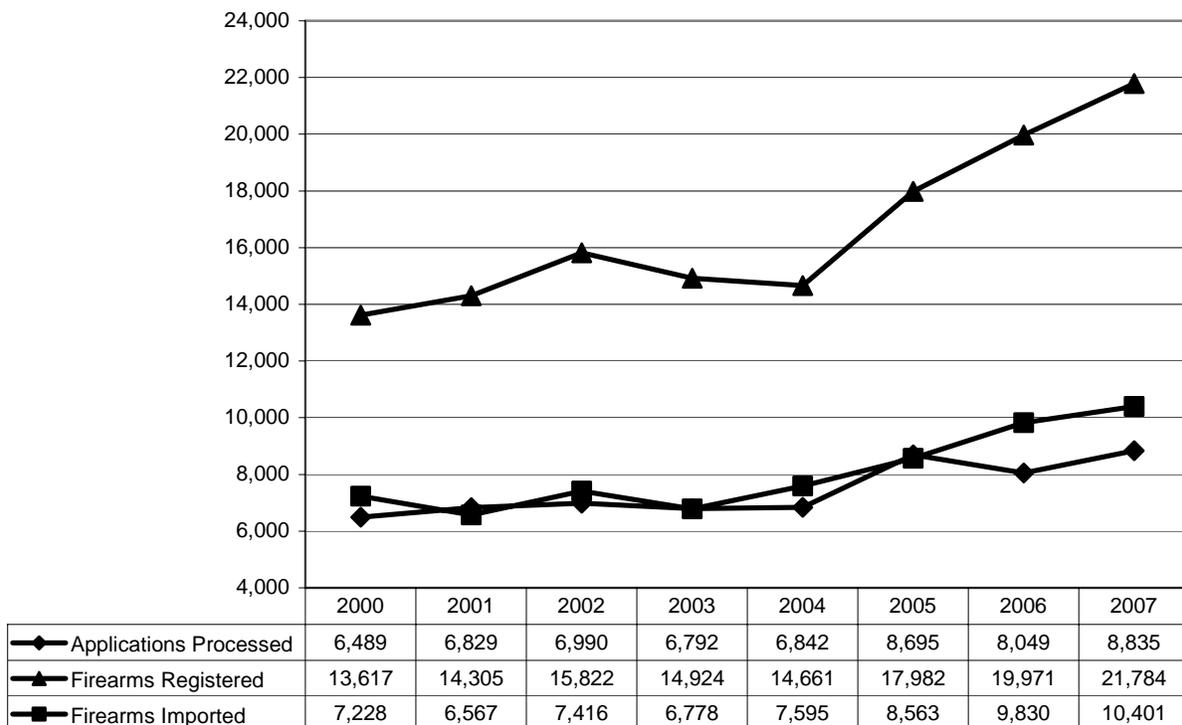


**Figure 3: Firearm Permit Application Rejection Rates, State of Hawaii and Counties, 2000-2007**



Firearm registration activity increased considerably over the eight-year period in which these data have been systematically compiled and reported (see Figure 4). From 2000 through 2007, the number of permit applications processed increased 36.2%, the number of firearms registered surged 60.0%, and the number of firearms imported rose 43.9%. Net increases throughout this period, including the especially large increases during the 2005-2007 period, were reported by all four counties.

**Figure 4: Firearm Registration Trends, State of Hawaii, 2000-2007**



## Permit Application Rejections

As noted earlier, 0.9% (83) of all permit applications in Hawaii during 2007 were rejected for cause. Hawaii's 2007 rejection rate is 62.5% (1.5 percentage points) below the 2.4% rate reported for all state and local agencies conducting background checks for firearm permits and transfers in 2005 (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2006). That Hawaii's rejection rate is perennially lower than the most comparable national figures is especially remarkable when the comparatively exhaustive background check procedures and extensive list of disqualifying factors used in the State of Hawaii are considered.

The vast majority of rejections in Hawaii during 2007 were for longarm (70, or 84.3%) rather than handgun (13, or 15.7%) permit applications. Following a trend since this annual report was first published, longarm permit applications in 2007 were rejected at a rate that is several times higher than the rejection rate for handgun permit applications (1.4% for longarm permit applications versus 0.3% for handgun permit applications).

Roughly three-fifths (49, or 59.0%) of the rejections in 2007 were due to applicants' prior criminal convictions, while 10.8% (9) were due to pending criminal cases. The remaining 30.1% (25) of rejections in 2007 were not based on the criminal histories of the applicants.

It is a misdemeanor in the State of Hawaii to provide falsified 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 2007, falsified criminal and/or mental health information was provided in 61.4% (51) of the 83 rejection cases; falsified information pertaining to anything *other than* criminal or mental health histories was provided in 9.6% (8) of the cases; and no falsified information was provided in 28.9% (24) of the cases.

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

**Table 2: Reasons for Rejected Firearm Permit Applications, State of Hawaii, 2007**

	#	%*
"Other" Offense	44	53.0
Mental Health Issues/Treatment**	12	14.5
Domestic Violence Offense	11	13.3
Restraining/Protective Order	6	7.2
Other (e.g., non-U.S. citizen)	6	7.2
Disqualifying Juvenile Offense	5	6.0
Drug Offense	3	3.9

\* Due to multiple disqualifying factors for some applicants, figures do not total 100%.

\*\* Rejections for mental health issues or treatment can be satisfactorily resolved with a verified doctor's note stating that the applicant is no longer adversely affected. 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 provides a breakdown of data entered into a description field for each rejection.

**Table 3: Descriptions of Firearm Permit Application Rejections, State of Hawaii, 2007\***

[N = 83 Rejections]	#	%**
abuse of family/household member	3	3.6
applicant resides with disqualified person	1	1.2
assault	14	16.9
assault + disorderly conduct	1	1.2
assault + harassment + drug charges (unspecified)	1	1.2
burglary	1	1.2
burglary, restraining order, mental health treatment, disqualifying juvenile offense	1	1.2
burglary, weapons offense, petty theft, insufficient funds (checks)	1	1.2
disorderly conduct	4	4.8
disqualifying juvenile offense	3	3.6
domestic violence (unspecified)	4	4.8
domestic violence (unspecified) + assault	2	2.4
domestic violence (unspecified) + drug sales	1	1.2
driving under the influence (opiates; indicates illicit drug user)	1	1.2
drug conviction (unspecified) + disqualifying juvenile offense	1	1.2
felony (unspecified)	5	6.0
harassment	3	3.6
involuntary manslaughter	1	1.2
mental health issue (unspecified)	4	4.8
mental health treatment	7	8.4
motor vehicle theft	1	1.2
needs medical clearance	2	2.4
reckless endangering	1	1.2
restraining order	6	7.2
sexual assault	2	2.4
substance abuse treatment	2	2.4
terroristic threatening	1	1.2
theft	2	2.4
violent crime (unspecified)	3	3.6
warrant (contempt of court)	1	1.2
warrant (unspecified)	2	2.4
weapons offense	1	1.2

\* Prior to a legal opinion issued by this Department in April 2006, some of the police departments interpreted a court-ordered alcohol abuse assessment following a conviction for driving under the influence (DUI) as a form of mental health treatment and thus grounds for rejection (a DUI conviction was not in and of itself a disqualifying factor). These cases historically comprised the largest single portion of rejections each year.

\*\* Due to rounding, figures do not total 100%.

## **Confiscations**

Although prohibited firearms (e.g., machineguns, “sawed-off” shotguns) are occasionally confiscated by registration personnel, none were reported for 2007.

## **Licenses to Carry Firearms**

Hawaii’s county police departments also process license applications for the open and/or concealed carry of firearms in public. Statewide in 2007, 236 employees of private security firms were issued carry licenses, and six (2.5%) were rejected. Seven private citizens applied for a concealed carry license; all were rejected at the sole discretion of the respective county police chiefs.

## **Acknowledgements**

This report was prepared with input and assistance from the county police departments’ firearm registration personnel: **Debra Agena**, Records Clerk, Maui County Police Department; **Emily Fabro**, Firearms Clerk, Kauai County Police Department; the firearm registration section, in particular **Suzy Yamasaki**, Records Clerk, City & County of Honolulu Police Department; and **Arlene Young**, Records Clerk, Hawaii County Police Department. As the volume of registration activity documented in this report demonstrates, these dedicated professionals work hard to serve their communities.

## **Reference**

Bureau of Justice Statistics (November, 2006). *Background checks for firearms transfers, 2005*. Publication NCJ 214256. U.S. Department of Justice: Office of Justice Programs.

*This report is available in PDF format from the Crime  
Prevention & Justice Assistance Division’s web site:*  
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