

# Criminal Justice Data Brief

## Firearm Registrations in Hawaii, 2004

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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 2004. This is the fifth annual publication of *Firearm Registrations in Hawaii*.

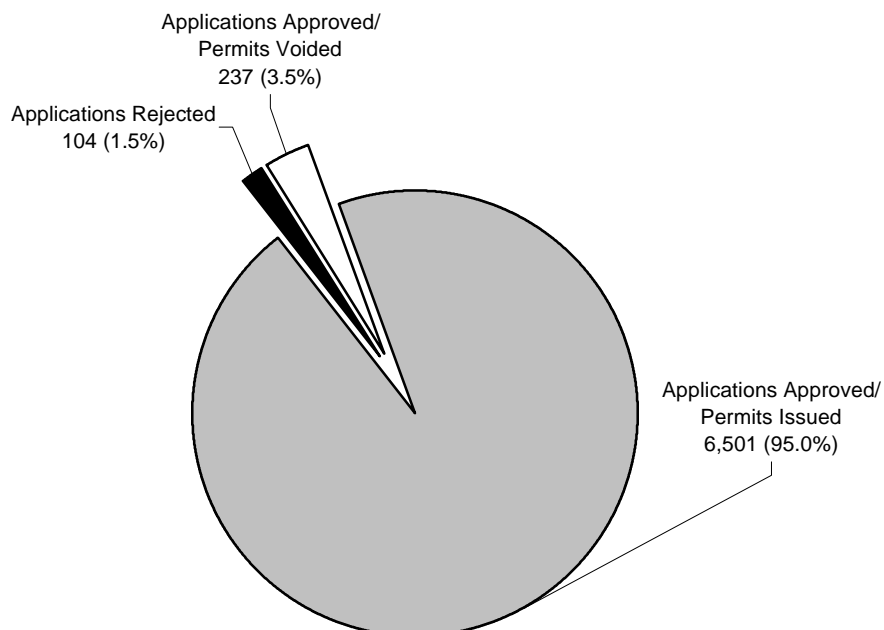
### Permit Applications Processed, Issued, Voided, and Rejected

A total of 6,842 personal/private firearm permit applications were processed statewide during 2004, marking a 0.7% increase from the 6,792 applications processed in 2003. Of the applications processed in 2004, 95.0% were approved and resulted in issued permits; 3.5% were approved but subsequently voided after the applicants failed to return for their permits within a specified time period; and 1.5% were rejected due to one or more disqualifying factors. Figure 1 shows additional details.

The proportion of rejections decreased 11.8% in 2004, down 0.2 percentage points from the 1.7% figure reported for 2003. Rejections are described in greater detail throughout this report.

**Figure 1: Firearm Permit Application Outcomes,  
State of Hawaii, 2004**

[6,842 Total Applications Processed]



## Registrations and Importations

The 6,501 permits issued in 2004 cover a total of 14,661 firearms registered. Just over half (7,595, or 51.8%) of these firearms were imported from out-of-state, with the remainder (7,066, or 48.2%) accounted for by in-state transfers (i.e., firearms that were already in Hawaii). This marks the first year in this publication's five-year history during which more firearms were imported than were transferred between in-state parties. Although there is no way to track the number of firearms that permanently leave the state, informal estimates from both this Department and the City & County of Honolulu Police Department place the number of privately owned firearms in Hawaii at approximately 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 or shotguns), while one-time permits are issued to acquire specific handguns. By firearm type, over half (3,621, or 55.7%) of the total permits issued during 2004 were longarm permits, while 44.3% (2,880) 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 60.4% (8,851) of all firearms registered in 2004. Broken out further, rifles and shotguns comprised 43.8% (6,417) and 16.6% (2,434) of total registrations, respectively. The remaining 39.6% (5,810) of registered firearms were handguns.

## County Comparisons and Registration Activity Over Time

Table 1 shows the distribution of firearm registration activity during 2004 across the four counties and for the State of Hawaii.

**Table 1: Firearm Registration Activity, State of Hawaii and Counties, 2004**

	C&C of Honolulu	Hawaii County	Maui County	Kauai County	State Total
Applications Processed	4,208	1,283	851	500	<b>6,842</b>
Applications Approved/ Permits Issued	3,997	1,209	797	498	<b>6,501</b>
Applications Approved/ Permits Voided	197	11	29	0	<b>237</b>
Applications Rejected	14	63	25	2	<b>104</b>
Rejection Rate	0.3%	4.9%	2.9%	0.4%	<b>1.5%</b>
Firearms Registered	8,524	3,138	2,022	977	<b>14,661</b>
Firearms Imported	4,886	1,344	936	429	<b>7,595</b>

As compared to Hawaii's resident population distribution, firearm registration activity occurred disproportionately across the four counties during 2004 (see Figure 2, next page). (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 value.)

Based on its population size, 14% fewer permit applications were processed in the City & County of Honolulu than would be expected, and 82% fewer rejections were reported. Hawaii County recorded a 58% larger-than-expected share of processed applications and a 408% larger portion of rejections. Maui County processed applications proportionately to its population size, but its share of rejections was 118% larger than expected. Kauai County processed 40% more applications and 60% fewer rejections than would be anticipated based on its population size. A possible explanation for the disparity in rejection rates is discussed below.

**Figure 2: County Distribution of Permit Applications Processed and Rejected (2004) versus Resident Population Distribution (2003)**

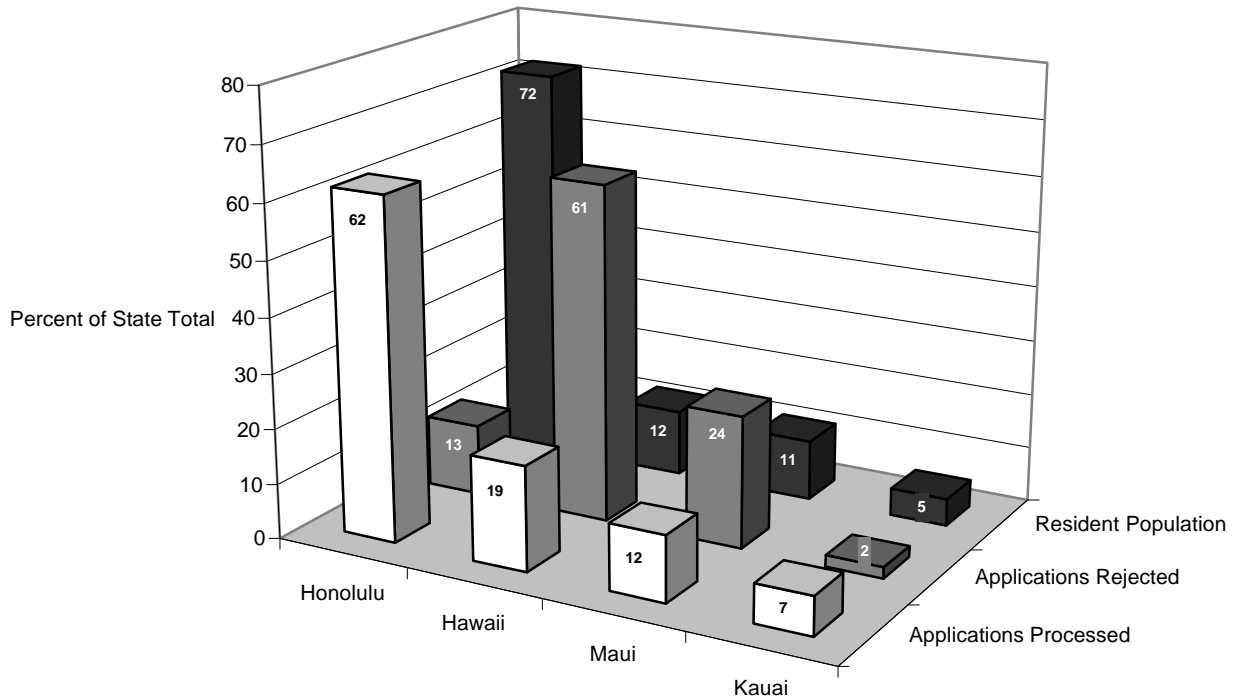
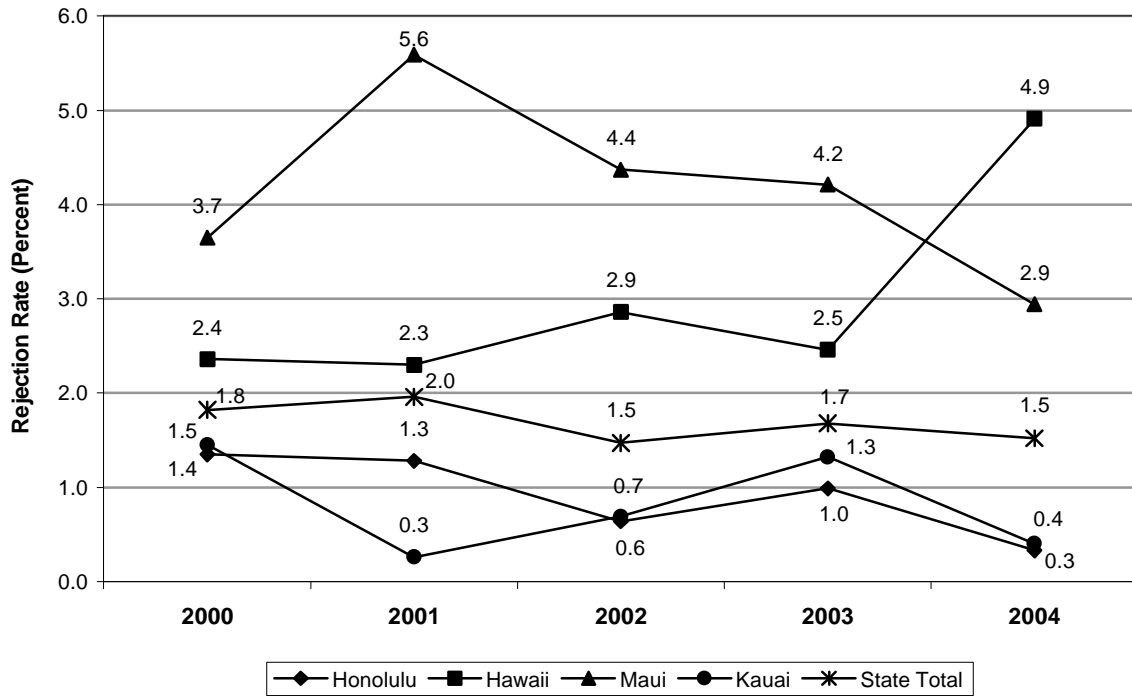


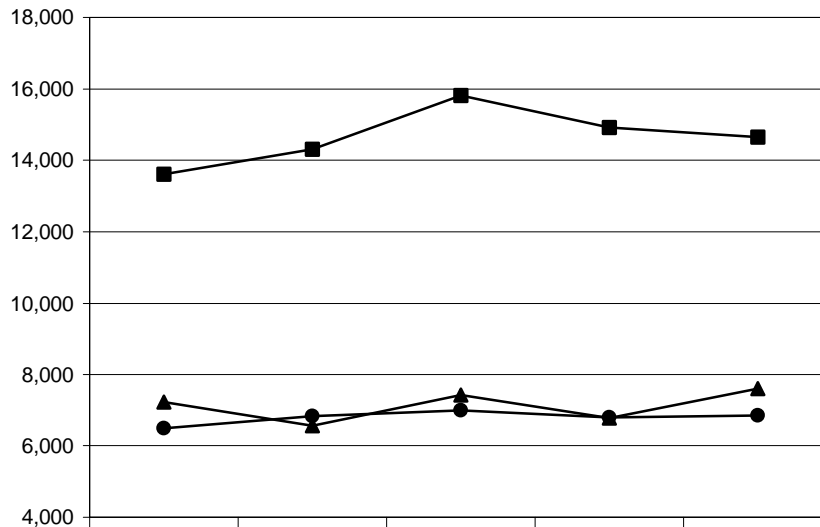
Figure 3 (next page) shows county-level permit application rejection rates over the 2000-2004 reporting period. As can be seen, the rejection rates vary considerably *between* counties but remained fairly stable *within* counties until last year. Hawaii County’s rejection rate in 2004 (4.9%) was 96.0% higher than its average rate for the 2000-2003 period (2.5%) and was the highest rate in the State. Maui County’s rejection rate, which had consistently been the highest in the State during previous years, fell 35.5% from a 4.5% average rate for 2000-2003 to reach its record low level of 2.9% in 2004. Discussions with firearm registration personnel at the county police departments indicate that changes in Records Division supervisors are most likely to account for the shifts in rejection rates during 2004; the new supervisors may have utilized their discretion differently from their predecessors in terms of considering whether or not 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 may or may not constitute a “crime of violence” (e.g., disorderly conduct).

Firearm registration activity increased over the five-year period that these data have been systematically compiled and reported (see Figure 4, next page). From 2000 to 2004, the number of processed applications increased 5.4%, the number of firearms registered rose 7.7%, and the number of firearms imported increased 5.1%.

**Figure 3: Firearm Permit Application Rejection Rates, State of Hawaii and Counties, 2000-2004**



**Figure 4: Firearm Registration Trends, State of Hawaii, 2000-2004**



	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
● Applications Processed	6,489	6,829	6,990	6,792	6,842
■ Firearms Registered	13,617	14,305	15,822	14,924	14,661
▲ Firearms Imported	7,228	6,567	7,416	6,778	7,595

## Rejection Types

As previously noted, 1.5% (104) of all permit applications in Hawaii during 2004 were rejected for cause. Hawaii's 2004 rejection rate is 21.1% (0.4 percentage points) less than the 1.9% figure reported for all state and local agencies conducting background checks for firearm permits and transfers in 2003 (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2004). That Hawaii's rejection rate is lower than the most recent national figure is especially noteworthy when the comparatively exhaustive background check procedures and extensive list of disqualifying factors used in the State of Hawaii are taken into consideration.

The vast majority of rejections in Hawaii during 2004 were for longarm (89, or 85.6%) rather than handgun (15, or 14.4%) permit applications. Following a trend since this annual report was first published, longarm permit applications in 2004 were rejected at a rate that is several times higher than the rejection rate for handgun permit applications (2.3% for longarm permit applications versus 0.5% for handgun permit applications).

Up slightly from 36.8% (42 of 114) in 2003, 38.5% (40 of 104) of the rejections in 2004 were due to applicants' prior criminal convictions, while 6.7% (7) were due to pending cases. However, the majority (54.8%, or 57) of rejections in 2004 were not based on the criminal histories of the applicants.

It is a misdemeanor in the State of 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 2004, falsified criminal and/or mental health information was provided in 60.6% (63) of the 104 rejection cases; falsified information pertaining to anything *other than* criminal or mental health histories was not provided in any cases; and no false information was provided in 39.4% (41) 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, 2004**

	Number	Percent*
Mental Health Issues/Treatment	37	35.6
"Other" Offense	27	26.0
Domestic Violence Offense	18	17.3
Other (e.g., non-U.S. citizen)	9	8.7
Disqualifying Juvenile Offense	6	5.8
Temporary Restraining Order	4	3.8
Drug Offense	2	1.9

\*Figures do not total 100% due to multiple disqualifying factors for some applicants and missing data for one case.

Rejections for mental health issues or treatment, which annually 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 at some point in the 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 provides a breakdown of data entered into a description field for each rejection. It should be noted that the police departments interpret a court-ordered alcohol abuse assessment following a conviction for driving under the influence of intoxicants (DUI) 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 comprise a significant proportion of rejections each year (13.5% in 2004).

**Table 3: Descriptions of Firearm Permit Application Rejections, State of Hawaii, 2004**

	Number	Percent*
abuse of family/household member	7	6.7
abuse of family/household member (declined prosecution - applicant can reapply)	2	1.9
abuse of family/household member + DUI alcohol assessment	1	1.0
abuse of family/household member + outstanding warrant	1	1.0
alcohol abuse treatment	2	1.9
anxiety with paranoid components	1	1.0
assault	15	14.4
assault (California)	1	1.0
assault (declined prosecution; chief's discretion)	2	1.9
assault (domestic violence)	1	1.0
assault (Washington)	1	1.0
assault + DUI alcohol assessment	1	1.0
assault + mental health treatment	2	1.9
assault + terroristic threatening	1	1.0
breaking and entering	1	1.0
burglary	1	1.0
burglary (Boston)	1	1.0
burglary + 2 misdemeanor assaults	1	1.0
burglary + assault	1	1.0
criminal property damage	1	1.0
custodial interference	1	1.0
depression	2	1.9
did not provide medical information	1	1.0
disorderly conduct	1	1.0
disorderly conduct with physical contact	1	1.0
disqualifying juvenile offense	3	2.9
drug possession	1	1.0
DUI alcohol assessment	14	13.5
felony (unspecified)	2	1.9
mental health issues (unspecified)	2	1.9
mental health treatment	7	6.7
mental health treatment + outstanding warrant	1	1.0
negligent homicide	1	1.0
not of legal age to possess firearms	1	1.0
outstanding warrant	5	4.8
possession of marijuana with intent to sell	1	1.0
promoting detrimental drug	1	1.0
reckless endangering	2	1.9
robbery	1	1.0
smuggling merchandise (felony) + mental health treatment	1	1.0
substance abuse treatment	1	1.0
suicide threat	2	1.9
temporary restraining order	5	4.8
temporary restraining order violation + mental health treatment	1	1.0
theft	2	1.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>100.8</b>

\*Total does not equal 100% due to rounding.

## Confiscations

Three legally prohibited firearms were confiscated by the City & County of Honolulu Police Department registration personnel during 2004, including an “assault pistol,” a rifle that at the time of its possession was in violation of the now-expired federal “assault weapons” ban, and a 10-gauge saluting cannon.

## Licenses to Carry

Hawaii’s county police departments also process license applications for the open and/or concealed carry of firearms in public. Statewide in 2004, 263 employees of private security firms were issued carry licenses and one (0.4%) was rejected due to disqualifying factors. (Notably, 2004 marks the first year in which the rejection rate for security officer carry permits did not exceed the rejection rate for regular longarm and handgun permit applications from the general public.) Five private citizens in the City & County of Honolulu applied for a concealed carry license and were denied at the 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, reduce and prevent the commission of these crimes. An adjunct purpose of this annual firearm registration report is to support the PSN-Hawaii effort. Other PSN-Hawaii study reports are available at the web sites shown below.

## 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; **Sgt. Michael Arnone** and the entire firearm registration section, in particular **Suzy Yamasaki**, Records Clerk, 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, 2004). *Background checks for firearms transfers, 2003*. Publication NCJ 204428. U.S. Department of Justice: Office of Justice Programs.



[www.psn.gov](http://www.psn.gov)



[psnhawaii.org](http://psnhawaii.org)

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

**[cpja.ag.state.hi.us](http://cpja.ag.state.hi.us)**

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