

Criminal Justice Data Brief

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Firearm Registrations in Hawaii, 2008

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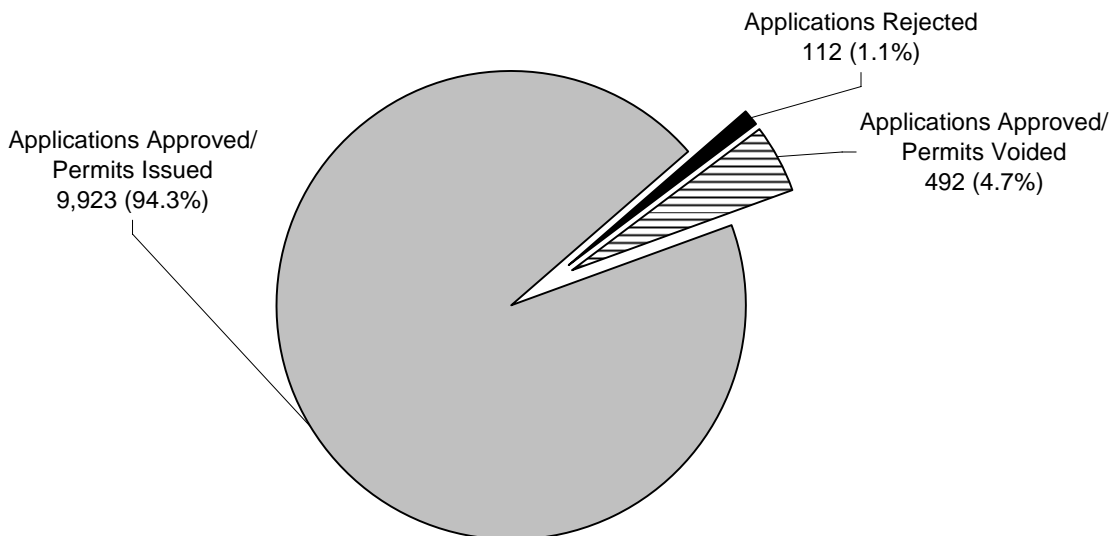
Hawaii Revised Statutes §134-14 requires the county police departments to provide to the Department of the Attorney General a monthly report of firearm registration activity. The data from these reports were compiled in order to provide the statistics presented herein for Calendar Year 2008. This is the ninth annual publication of *Firearm Registrations in Hawaii*.

Permit Applications Processed, Issued, Voided, and Rejected

A record high total of 10,527 personal/private firearm permit applications were processed statewide during 2008, marking a substantial, 19.6% increase from the 8,835 applications processed in 2007. Of the applications processed in 2008, 94.3% were approved and resulted in issued permits; 4.7% were approved but subsequently voided after the applicants failed to return for their permits within a specified time period; and 1.1% 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, 2008

(N = 10,527 Total Applications Processed)



Registrations and Importations

The 9,923 permits issued statewide in 2008 cover a record high total of 25,996 firearms registered. Just under half (11,978, or 46.1%) of the firearms registered during 2008 were imported from out-of-state, with the majority (14,108, or 53.9%) 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 made during the late-1990s by the Department of the Attorney General and the City & County of Honolulu Police Department placed 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 tied record high of 57.0% (5,658) of the 9,923 total permits issued during 2008 were to acquire longarms, while a tied record low of 43.0% (4,265) 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 near-record high of 62.0% (16,119) of all firearms registered in 2008 (25,996). Broken out further, rifles and shotguns comprised 48.4% (12,580) and 13.6% (3,539) of total registrations, respectively. The remaining, record low 38.0% (9,877) of registered firearms were handguns.

County Comparisons and Registration Trends

Table 1 shows the distribution of firearm registration activity during 2008 across the four counties and for the State of Hawaii overall.

**Table 1: Firearm Registration Activity,
State of Hawaii and Counties, 2008**

	C&C of Honolulu	Hawaii County	Maui County	Kauai County	State Total
Applications Processed	6,397	1,979	1,264	887	10,527
Applications Approved/ Permits Issued	6,022	1,917	1,193	791	9,923
Applications Approved/ Permits Voided	338	23	34	94	492
Applications Rejected	37	36	37	2	112
Rejection Rate	0.6%	1.8%	2.9%	0.2%	1.1%
Firearms Registered	16,641	5,106	2,634	1,615	25,996
Firearms Imported	8,266	2,327	780	605	11,978

As compared to Hawaii's resident population distribution, firearm registration activity occurred disproportionately across the four counties during 2008 (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, 12% fewer permit applications were processed in the City & County of Honolulu during 2008 than would be expected, and 53% fewer rejections were reported. Hawaii County recorded a 36% larger-than-expected share of processed applications and a 128% larger portion of rejections. Maui County processed applications in rough proportion to its population size, but its share of rejections tripled expectations. Kauai County processed 60% more applications than would be anticipated based on its population size, while its share of rejections was 60% below 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 may sometimes be related to the assignment of new Records Division supervisors.

Figure 2: County Distribution of Permit Applications Processed and Rejected versus Resident Population Distribution, 2008

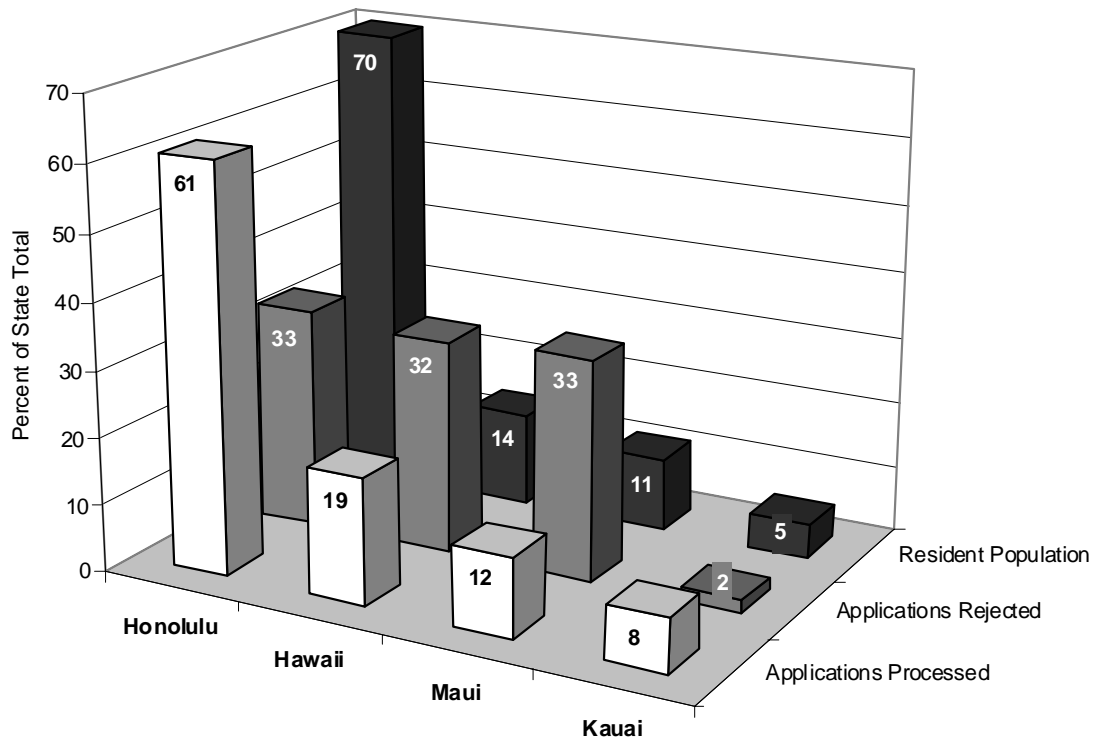
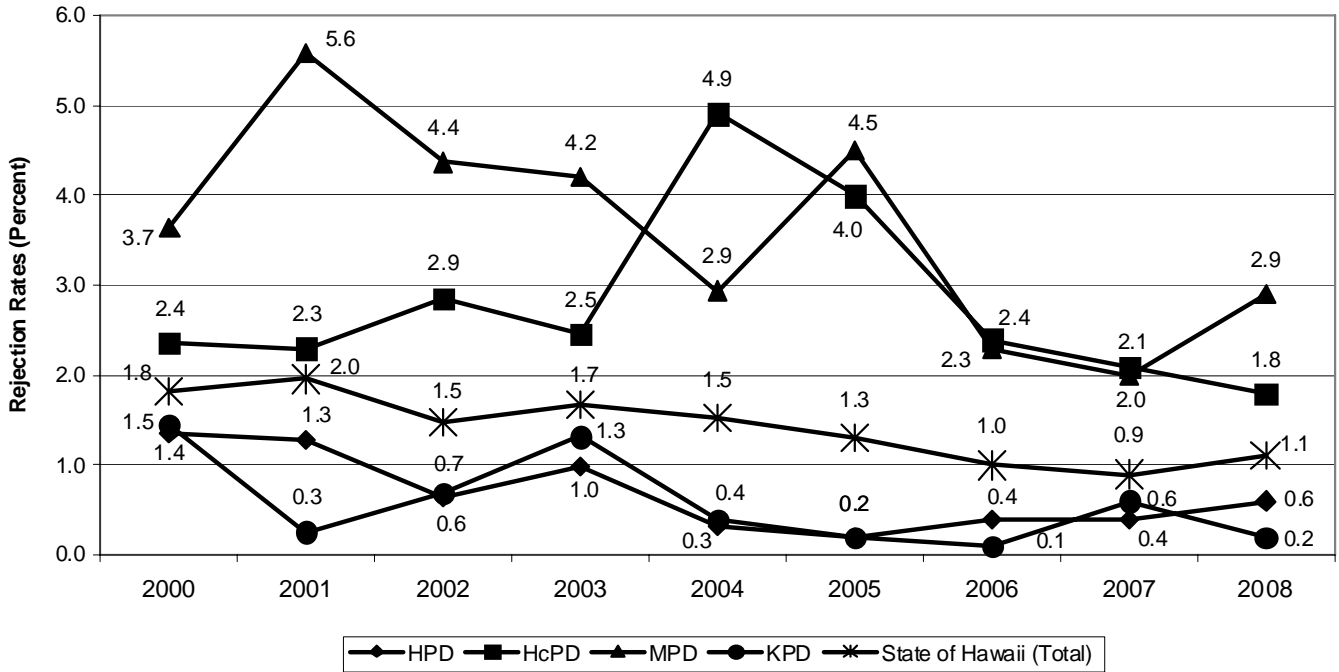
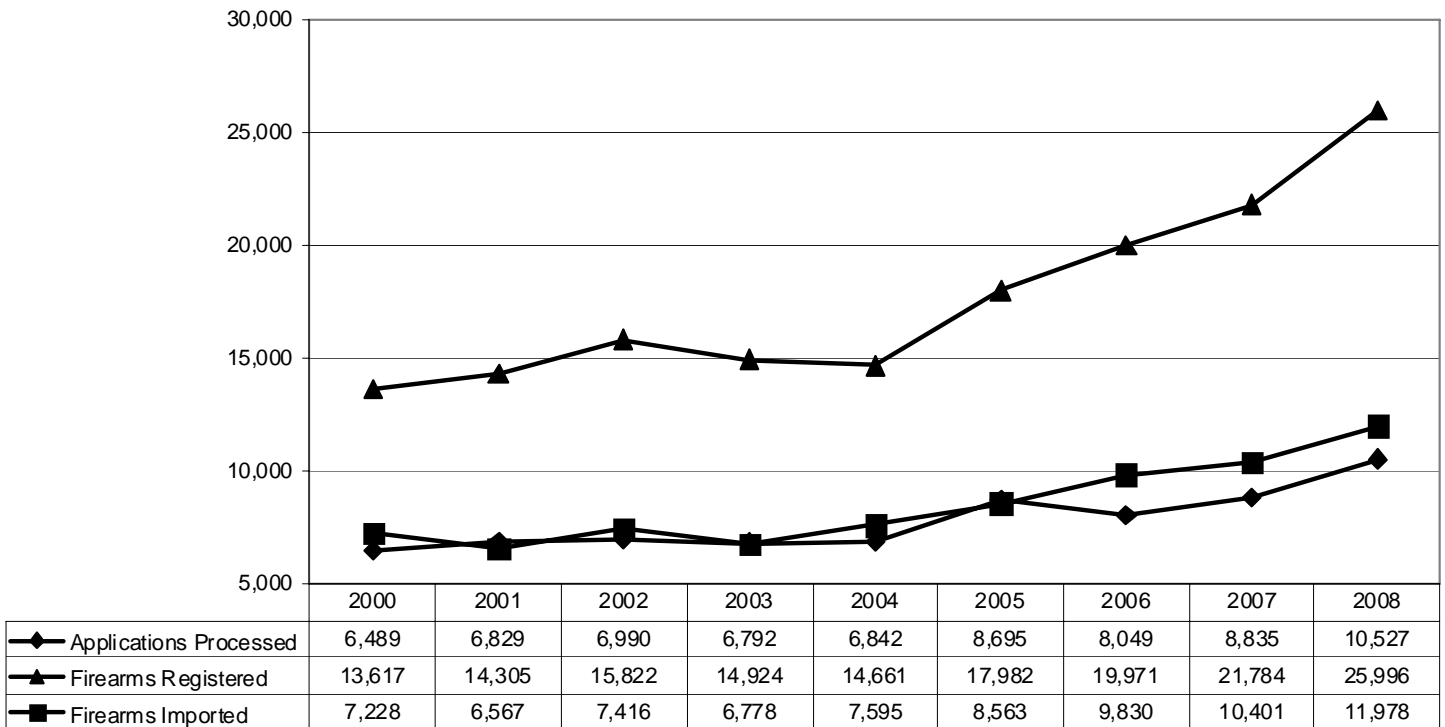


Figure 3: Firearm Permit Application Rejection Rates, State of Hawaii and Counties, 2000-2008



Firearm registration activity increased considerably over the nine-year period in which these data have been systematically compiled and reported (see Figure 4). From 2000 through 2008, the number of permit applications processed increased 62.2%, the number of firearms registered surged 90.9%, and the number of firearms imported rose 65.7%.

Figure 4: Firearm Registration Trends, State of Hawaii, 2000-2008



Permit Application Rejections

As noted earlier, 1.1% (112) of all permit applications in Hawaii during 2008 were rejected for cause. Hawaii's 2008 rejection rate is 45.0% (0.9 percentage points) below the 2.0% rate reported for all state and local agencies conducting background checks for firearm permits and transfers in 2007 (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2008). 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 2008 were for longarm (95, or 84.8%) rather than handgun (17, or 15.2%) permit applications. Following a trend since this annual report was first published, longarm permit applications in 2008 were rejected at a rate that is several times higher than the rejection rate for handgun permit applications (1.6% for longarm permit applications versus 0.4% for handgun permit applications).

Just over half (57, or 50.9%) of the rejections in 2008 were due to applicants' prior criminal convictions, while 17.0% (19) were due to pending criminal cases. The remaining 32.1% (36) of rejections in 2008 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 2008, falsified criminal and/or mental health information was provided in 59.8% (67) of the 112 rejection cases; falsified information pertaining to anything *other than* criminal or mental health histories was provided in 3.6% (4) of the cases; and no falsified information was provided in 35.7% (40) 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, 2008

	#	%
"Other" Offense	55	49.1
Other (e.g., non-U.S. citizen)	16	14.3
Mental Health Issues/Treatment*	14	12.5
Domestic Violence Offense	10	8.9
Restraining/Protective Order	10	8.9
Drug Offense	6	5.4
Disqualifying Juvenile Offense	1	0.9

* 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, 2008*

[N = 112 Rejections]	#	%**
Abuse of family/household member	9	8.0
Abuse of family/household member + mainland traffic felony	1	0.9
Assault	26	23.2
Assault + dishonorable military discharge	1	0.9
Assault + substance abuse treatment	1	0.9
Assault + theft	1	0.9
Burglaries + drug offenses	1	0.9
Burglary	2	1.8
Crime of violence (unspecified)	2	1.8
Disorderly conduct	4	3.6
Dispositions unavailable for mainland arrests	1	0.9
Disqualifying juvenile offense	3	2.7
Drug offense(s)	5	4.5
Environmental felony	2	1.8
False answer on permit application	1	0.9
Felony offense (unspecified)	1	0.9
Felony offense (unspecified, mainland)	3	2.7
Felony offense (unspecified, mainland) + substance abuse treatment	1	0.9
Fugitive (military deserter)	1	0.9
Grand jury indictment (unspecified)	1	0.9
Kidnapping	1	0.9
Mental health issue	5	4.5
Mental health treatment	3	2.7
Not a U.S. citizen	1	0.9
On probation (unspecified offense)	1	0.9
Resides with disqualified person	3	2.7
Restraining order	10	8.9
Substance abuse treatment	3	2.7
Suicide attempt	1	0.9
Terroristic threatening	4	3.6
Theft	2	1.8
Under the age of 21	1	0.9
Unlawful imprisonment	1	0.9
Unspecified issue/offense (mainland)	1	0.9
Warrant(s) outstanding	3	2.7
Warrant(s) outstanding (mainland)	4	3.6
Weapon offenses	1	0.9

* 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 2008.

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 2008, 195 employees of private security firms were issued carry licenses, and one (0.5%) was rejected. One private citizen applied for a concealed carry license and was rejected at the discretion of the respective county police chief.

Acknowledgements

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Reference

Bureau of Justice Statistics (July, 2008). *Background checks for firearms transfers, 2007*. <<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/html/bcft/2007/table/bcft07st02.htm>>. 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:*

hawaii.gov/ag/cpja