

# Firearm Registrations in Hawaii, 2020

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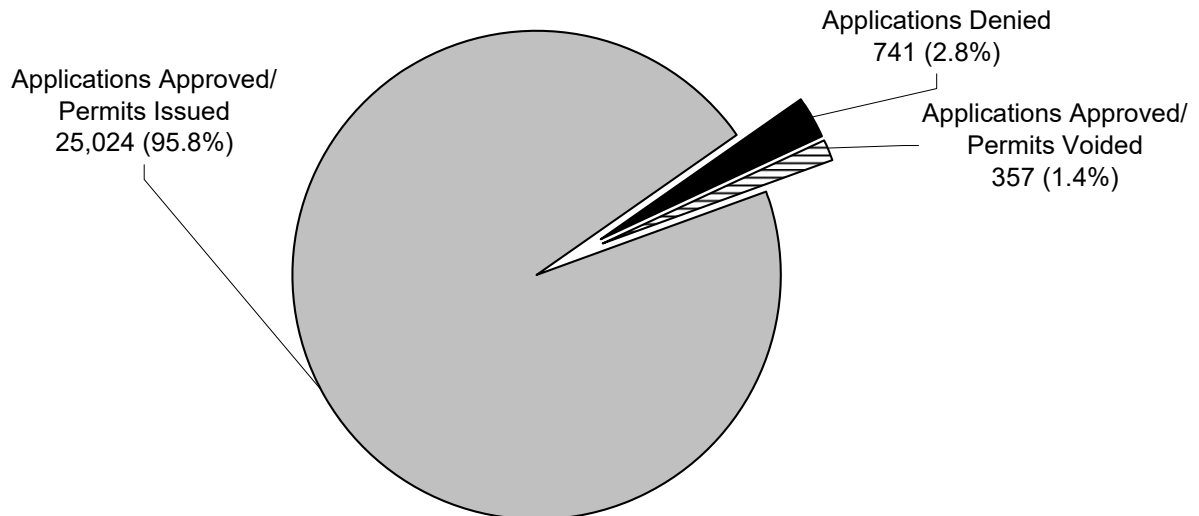
Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS) § 134-14 requires the county police departments to provide to the Department of the Attorney General a monthly report of firearm registration activity. The data from these reports were compiled in order to provide the statistics presented herein for Calendar Year 2020. This is the twenty-first annual publication of *Firearm Registrations in Hawaii*.

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

A record high total of 26,122 personal/private firearm permit applications were processed statewide during 2020, marking a 62.3% increase from 16,098 applications processed in 2019. Of the applications processed in 2020, 95.8% were approved and resulted in issued permits; 1.4% were approved but subsequently voided after the applicants failed to return for their permits within the specified time period; and a record high of 2.8% were denied due to one or more disqualifying factors. Figure 1 provides additional information. Denials are described in greater detail throughout this report.

**Figure 1: Firearm Permit Application Outcomes,  
State of Hawaii, 2020**

26,122 Applications Processed



## Registrations and Importations

The 25,024 permits issued statewide in 2020 cover a total of 53,481 firearms registered throughout the year, resulting in a 35.5% increase from the 39,467 firearms registered during 2019. Just under half (26,708, or 49.9%) of the firearms registered during 2020 were imported from out-of-state, with the balance accounted for by transfers of firearms that were previously registered in Hawaii. Independent estimates made during the late-1990s by the Department of the Attorney General and the City & County of Honolulu Police Department conservatively placed the number of privately owned firearms in Hawaii at “at least one million.” Adding to that rough tally during the 2000 through 2020 period, a total of 697,238 firearms were registered (including some more than once, by different owners) and 365,112 were imported, while an unknown number of firearms permanently left the state.

## 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 single-use permits are issued to acquire specific handguns. By firearm type, 50.7% (12,694) of the permits issued during 2020 were to acquire longarms, while 49.3% (12,330) 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 55.7% (29,799) of all firearms registered during 2020 (39,467). Broken out further, rifles and shotguns comprised 45.1% (24,126) and 10.6% (5,673) of total registrations, respectively. The remaining 44.3% (23,682) of firearms registered throughout 2020 were handguns.

## County Comparisons and Registration Trends

Table 1 shows the distribution of firearm registration activity during 2020 across the four counties and for the State of Hawaii overall.

**Table 1: Firearm Registration Activity, State of Hawaii and Counties, 2020**

	C&C of Honolulu	Hawaii County	Maui County	Kauai County	State Total
Applications Processed	16,259	5,347	2,874	1,642	<b>26,122</b>
Applications Approved/ Permits Issued	15,694	5,004	2,722	1,604	<b>25,024</b>
Applications Approved/ Permits Voided	278	9	53	17	<b>357</b>
Applications Denied	287	334	99	21	<b>741</b>
Denial Rate*	1.8%	6.3%	3.4%	1.3%	<b>2.8%</b>
Firearms Registered	30,496	11,075	7,464	4,446	<b>53,481</b>
Firearms Imported	15,466	5,240	3,628	2,394	<b>26,708</b>

\* The most comparable national figure is a 5.6% average denial rate in 2017 for the five states in which local law enforcement agencies conduct background checks for firearm purchases (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2021).

As compared to Hawaii’s resident population distribution, firearm registration activity occurred disproportionately across the four counties during 2020 (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 value.)

**Figure 2: County Distribution of Permit Applications Processed and Denied versus Resident Population Distribution, 2020**

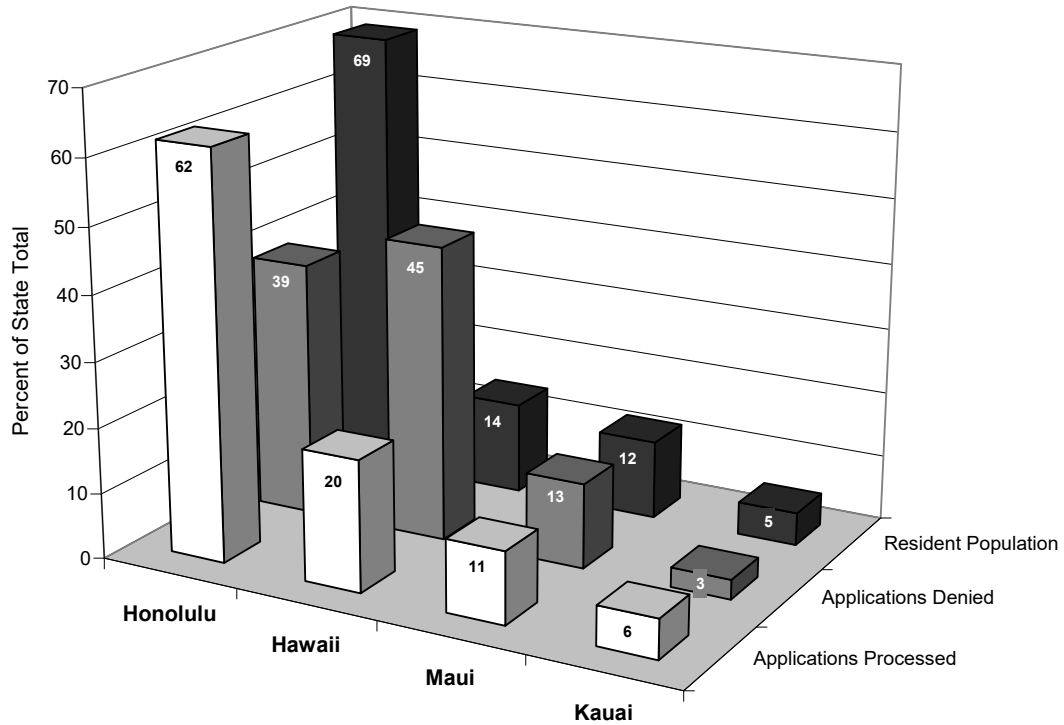
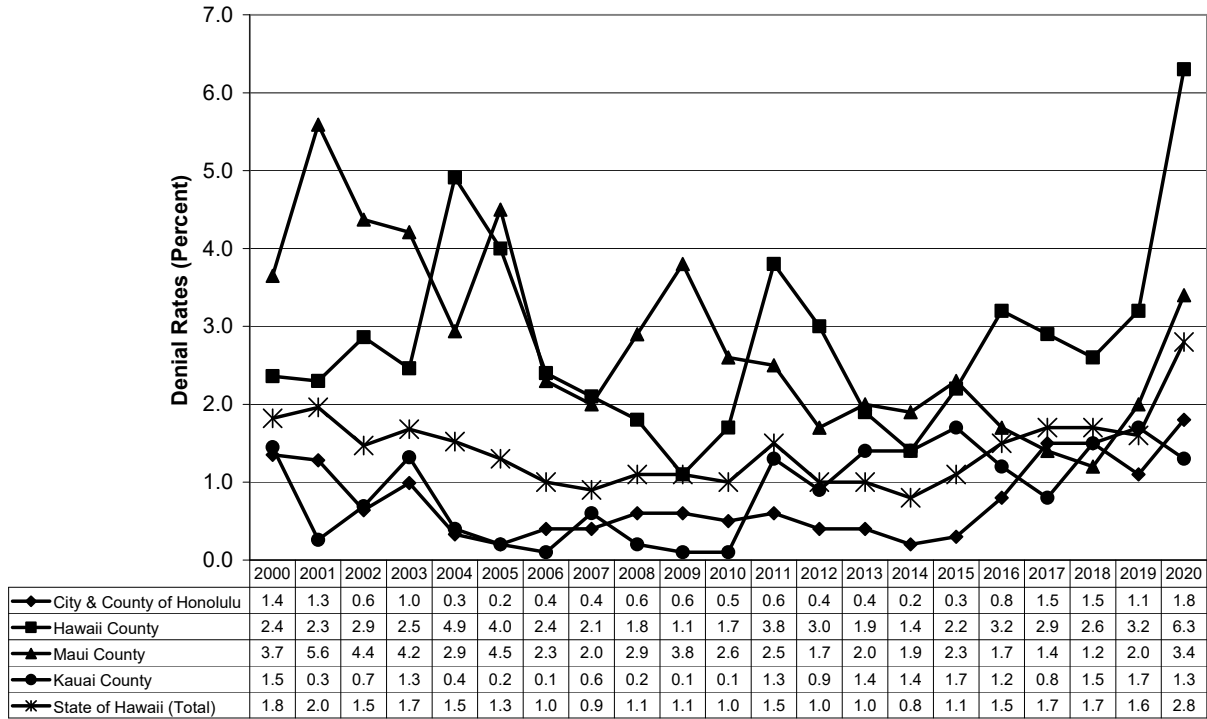


Figure 3 (next page) presents historical data on permit application denial rates for the State of Hawaii and each of the four counties. Record high denial rates were reported for 2020 for the state as a whole (2.8%), the City & County of Honolulu (1.8%), and Hawaii County, for which the 6.3% denial rate in 2020 was the highest on record among the state and all individual counties.

**Figure 3: Firearm Permit Application Denial Rates, State of Hawaii and Counties, 2000-2020**



Firearm registration activity increased dramatically over the course of the 21 years for which these data have been systematically compiled and reported (see Figure 4). From 2000 through 2020, the number of statewide permit applications annually processed increased by 302.5%, the number of firearms annually registered climbed 292.8%, and the number of firearms annually imported rose 269.5%. The tally of 26,122 applications processed in 2020 is the highest on record for the state.

**Figure 4: Firearm Registration Trends, State of Hawaii, 2000-2020**

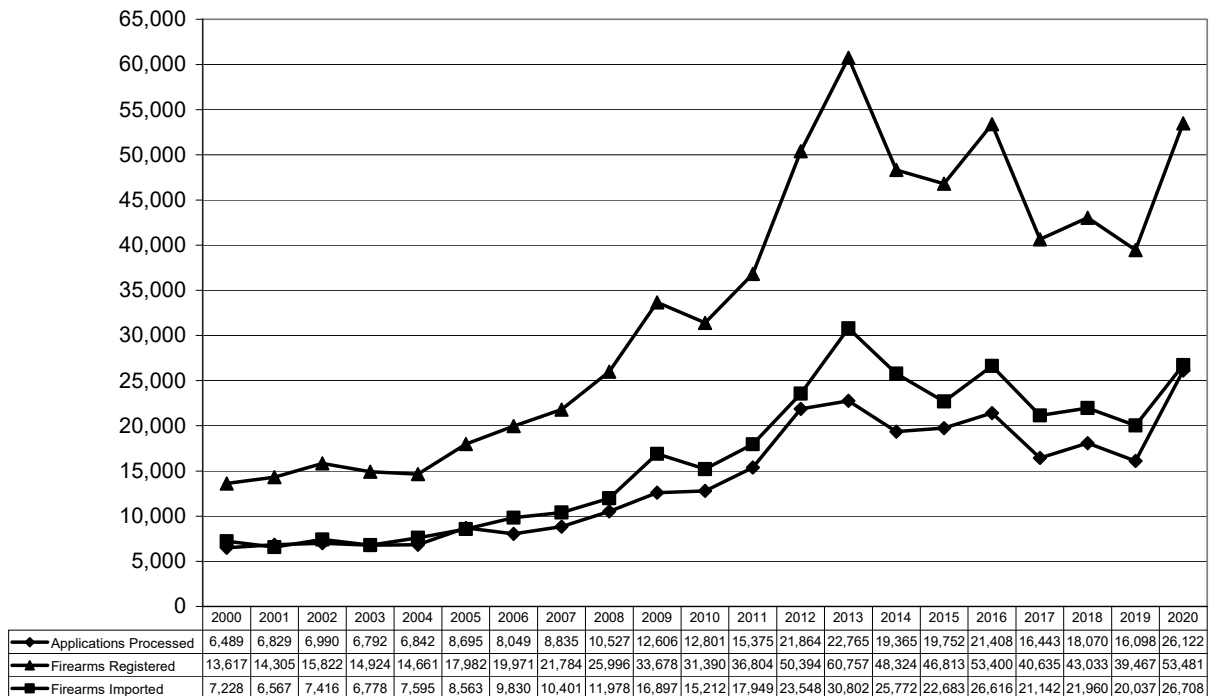
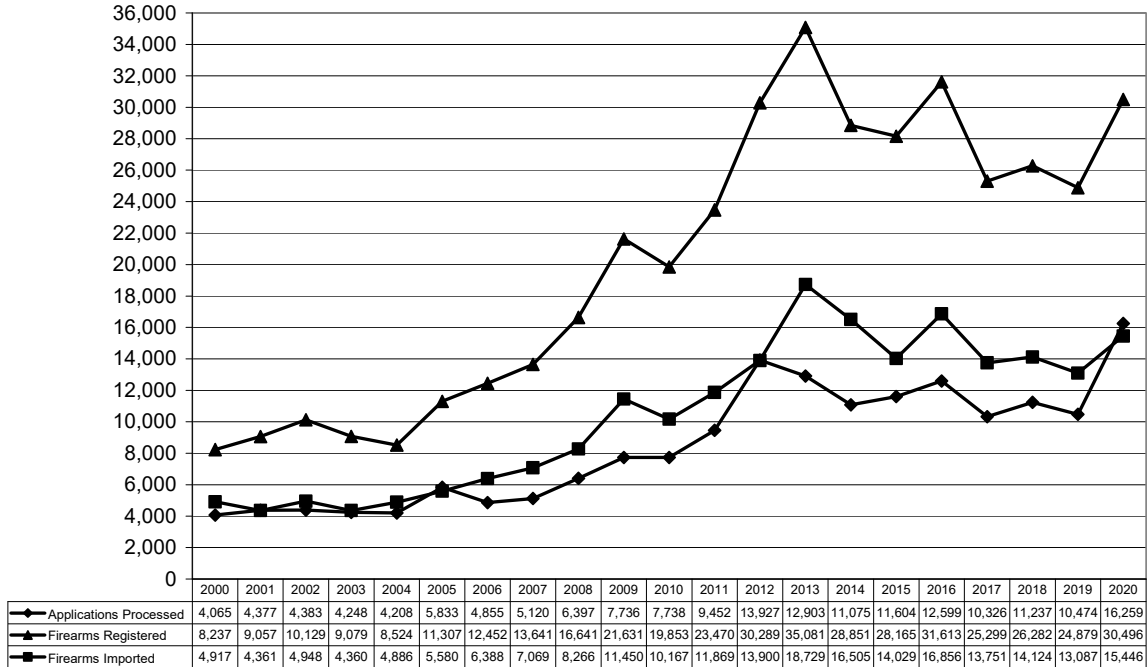


Figure 5 shows that, between 2000 and 2020 in the City & County of Honolulu, the annual tally of permits processed increased 300.0%, the number of firearms annually registered rose 270.2%, and the number of firearms annually imported climbed 214.1%. A record high tally of permits processed was reported for 2020.

**Figure 5: Firearm Registration Trends, City & County of Honolulu, 2000-2020**



As shown in Figure 6, the number of permits processed annually in Hawaii County during the 2000-2020 period surged 366.6%, the number of firearms annually registered increased 281.5%, and the number of firearms annually imported leaped 322.2%.

**Figure 6: Firearm Registration Trends, Hawaii County, 2000-2020**

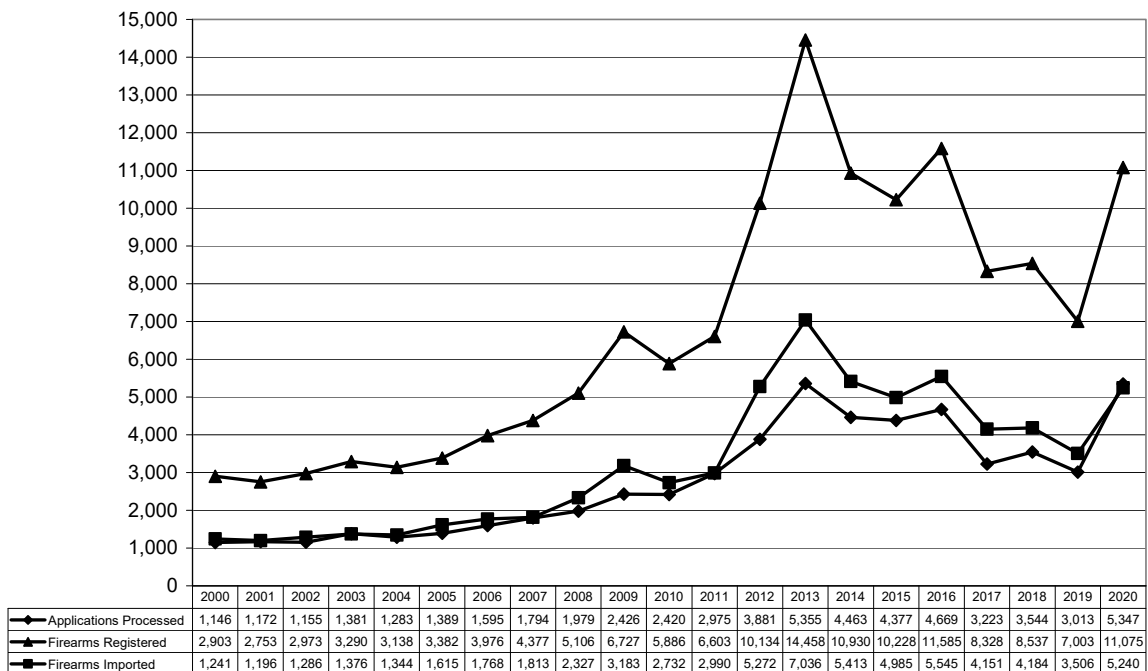
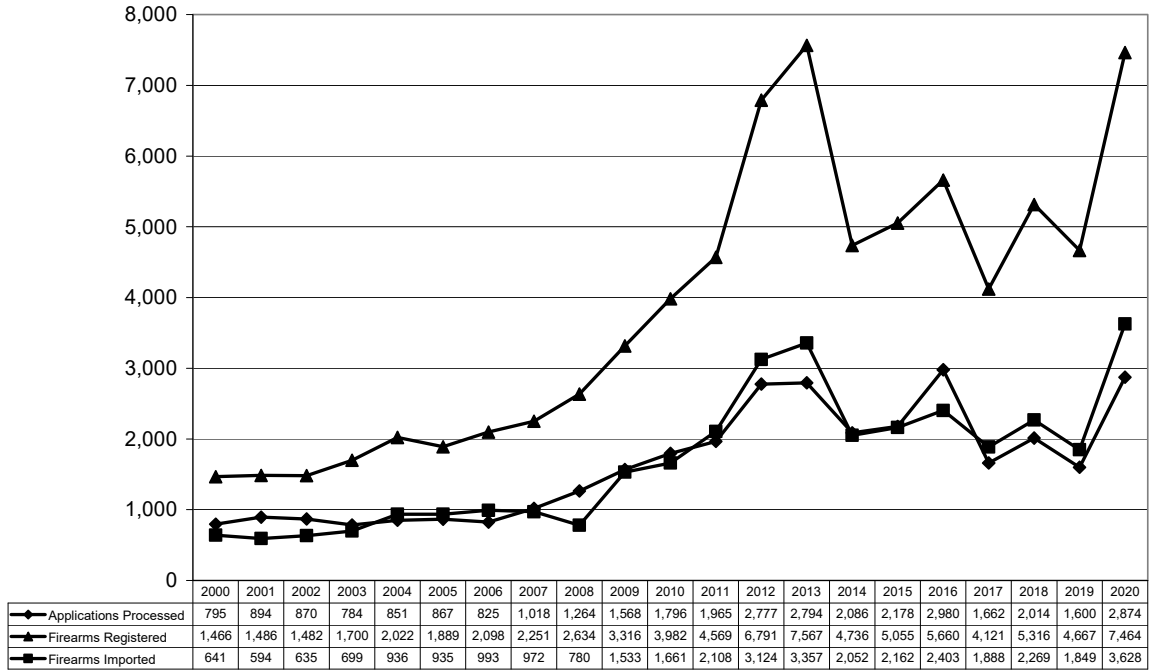


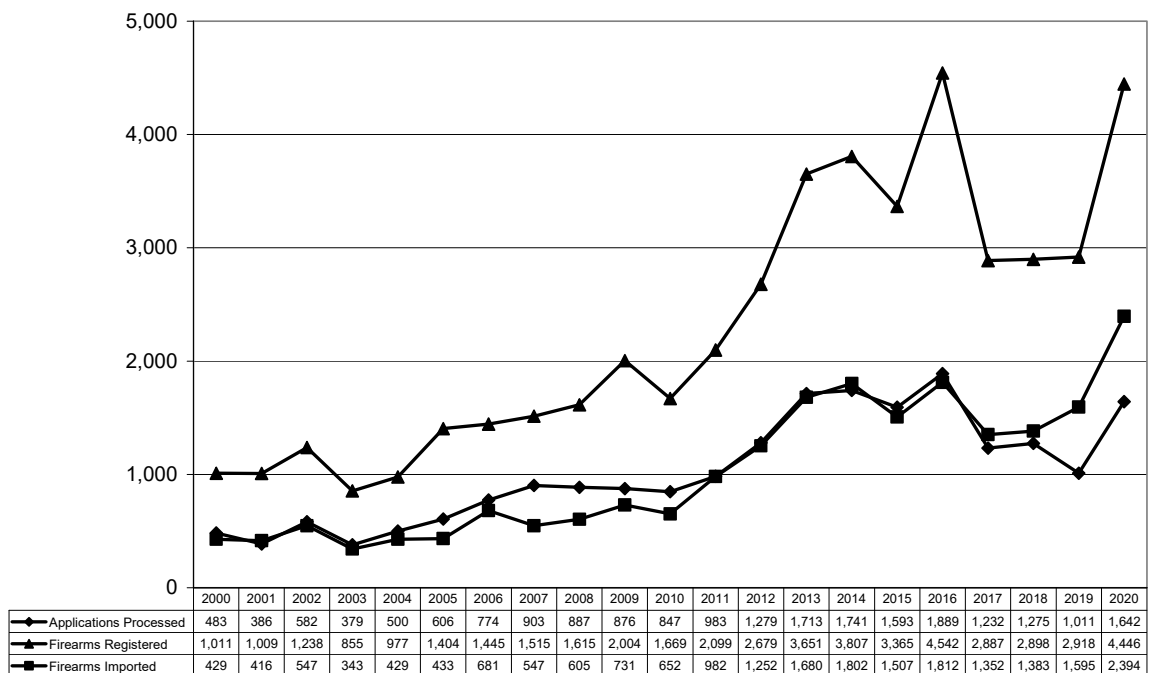
Figure 7 reveals that, between 2000 and 2020 in Maui County, the annual number of permits processed increased 261.4%, the number of firearms annually registered soared 409.1%, and the tally of firearms annually imported skyrocketed 466.0%. Record high tallies of firearms registered and imported were reported for 2020.

**Figure 7: Firearm Registration Trends, Maui County, 2000-2020**



As shown in Figure 8, the number of permits processed annually in Kauai County from 2000 through 2020 increased 240.0%, the number of firearms registered leaped 339.8%, and the number of firearms imported surged 458.0%. A record high tally of firearms imported was reported for 2020.

**Figure 8: Firearm Registration Trends, Kauai County, 2000-2020**



## Permit Application Denials

As noted earlier, a record high of 2.8% (741) permit applications were denied statewide in 2020. The majority of the denials were for longarm (546, or 73.7%) rather than handgun (195, or 26.3%) permit applications. Following a trend since this annual report was first published, longarm permit applications in 2020 were denied at a rate (1.6%) that is less than half the denial rate for handgun permit applications (4.0%).

Roughly one-quarter (172, or 23.2%) of the denials in 2020 were due to the applicants' prior criminal convictions, while 3.8% (28) were due to pending cases.

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 2020, falsified criminal or mental health information, or both, were provided in 41.7% (309) of the 741 denial cases; falsified information pertaining to anything other than criminal or mental health histories was provided in 8.6% (64) of the cases; falsified criminal/mental health information in addition to other falsified information was provided in 1.2% (9) of the cases, and no falsified information was provided in 48.4% (359) of the cases.

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

**Table 2: Reasons for Denied Firearm Permit Applications, State of Hawaii, 2020**

	#	%*
Mental Health-Related Issue**	274	37.0
"Other" Criminal Offense	207	27.9
Medical Marijuana Patient***	187	25.2
Domestic Violence****	49	6.6
Drug Offense	37	5.0
Restraining/Protective Order	19	2.6
Disqualifying Juvenile Offense	5	0.7
Other (e.g., not a U.S. citizen)	11	1.5

\* Figures do not total 100% due to multiple reasons for some denials.

\*\* Includes adverse mental health diagnoses and treatment, and drug or alcohol abuse/addiction and treatment. Denials for such reasons can be satisfactorily cleared with a verified doctor's note stating that the applicant is no longer adversely affected. While an original denial cannot be appealed or overturned, a new application may be submitted and the appropriate permit will be issued. At least one of the state's major healthcare providers recommends denial for virtually any sort of mental health issue or treatment noted in their clients' historical medical records, and does not provide a means to obtain a clearance, leaving such applicants to seek clearance from outside doctors and then reapply for their firearm permits.

\*\*\* Former medical marijuana patients may successfully apply for firearm permits at least one year after the expiration of their medical marijuana card.

\*\*\*\* Includes domestic violence-related offenses and counseling/treatment.

Table 3 provides a breakdown of information entered into a description field for each denial.

**Table 3: Descriptions of Firearm Permit Application Denials, State of Hawaii, 2020**

	741 Total Denials	#	%*
(unspecified)		1	0.1
"alternatives to violence" counseling		1	0.1
absent without leave (military)		3	0.4
abuse of family/household member		29	3.9
abuse of family/household member + anger mgmt treatment		1	0.1
abuse of family/household member + assault on police officer		1	0.1
abuse of family/household member + mental health issue		1	0.1
alcohol & substance abuse treatment + mental health issue		2	0.3
alcohol abuse treatment		31	4.2
alcohol abuse treatment + medical marijuana patient		1	0.1
anger management & alcohol abuse treatment		2	0.3
anger management & substance abuse treatment		1	0.1
anger management treatment		11	1.5
assault		48	6.5
assault + abuse of family/household member + DV & anger mgmt treatment + mental health issue		1	0.1
assault + abuse of family/household member + mental health issue		1	0.1
assault + disqualifying juvenile offense + mental health issue		1	0.1
assault + medical marijuana patient		1	0.1
assault + mental health issue		4	0.5
assault + terroristic threatening + burglary + drug offense		2	0.3
assault + warrant in Wisconsin		1	0.1
battery		11	1.5
battery + drug offense + medical marijuana patient		1	0.1
battery + substance abuse treatment		2	0.3
battery on police officer		2	0.3
burglary		4	0.5
burglary + motor vehicle theft		1	0.1
convictions in California (unspecified)		1	0.1
crime of violence (unspecified)		33	4.5
crime of violence (unspecified) + criminal property damage		1	0.1
criminal property damage		4	0.5
desertion		1	0.1
disorderly conduct		13	1.8
disorderly conduct + mental health issue		1	0.1
disposition needed re Florida probation violation		4	0.5
disqualifying juvenile offense		3	0.4
domestic battery		5	0.7
domestic battery + drug offense		2	0.3
domestic violence conviction in Nevada		2	0.3
drug offense		19	2.6
drug offense + alcohol abuse treatment		1	0.1
drug offense + conspiracy + mental health issue + didn't provide physical address		1	0.1
drug offense + disorderly conduct		3	0.4
drug offense + medical marijuana patient		2	0.3
drug offense + substance abuse treatment		1	0.1
drug offense + substance abuse treatment + medical marijuana patient		1	0.1
DUI (felony)		1	0.1
felonies (unspecified) in Washington + Oregon		1	0.1
felony (unspecified)		10	1.3
fleeing/eluding police in Florida		1	0.1
forgery		2	0.3



forgery + theft	2	0.3
fraud + mental health issue	2	0.3
harassment	9	1.2
inflicting corporal punishment on spouse (California)	1	0.1
kidnapping	1	0.1
marijuana user	2	0.3
medical marijuana patient	174	23.5
medical marijuana patient + needs medical clearance letter	1	0.1
mental health issue	174	23.5
mental health issue + medical marijuana patient	2	0.3
mental health issue + substance abuse	1	0.1
mental health issue + substance abuse treatment	2	0.3
mental health issue + substance abuse treatment + medical marijuana patient	1	0.1
motor vehicle theft	3	0.4
motor vehicle theft + burglary + weapons & drug offenses	1	0.1
motor vehicle theft + medical marijuana patient	1	0.1
no response from California re charge disposition	1	0.1
no response from Colorado re charge disposition	2	0.3
no response from Georgia re charge disposition	1	0.1
not a U.S. citizen	2	0.3
reckless endangering + domestic violence counseling	1	0.1
resisting arrest + disorderly conduct	1	0.1
restraining order	16	2.2
restraining order + mental health issue + substance abuse treatment	1	0.1
restraining orders + substance abuse treatment	1	0.1
robbery	3	0.4
sexual assault	5	0.7
substance abuse + mental health issue	1	0.1
substance abuse treatment	20	2.7
substance abuse treatment + "alternatives to violence" counseling	1	0.1
substance abuse treatment + medical marijuana patient	2	0.3
substance abuse treatment + mental health issue	1	0.1
suicide attempt + alcohol abuse treatment	1	0.1
suicide attempt + mental health issue	1	0.1
terroristic threatening	6	0.8
theft	6	0.8
theft + drug offense	1	0.1
theft + fraud	1	0.1
unauthorized entry into a dwelling	1	0.1
unspecified disqualifying factor (mainland)	1	0.1
vandalism	1	0.1
warrant	1	0.1
warrant in Florida for probation violation	1	0.1
warrant in Kansas	1	0.1
warrant in Ohio + terroristic threatening + drug offense	1	0.1
warrants in Kansas and Oklahoma for DV assault & battery	3	0.4
weapons offense	1	0.1

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

## Licenses to Carry Firearms

Hawaii's county police departments also process license applications for the carrying of firearms in public. Statewide in 2020, 123 employees of private security firms applied for and were issued carry licenses, and one (0.8%) was denied. A total of 23 private citizens applied for a carry license in 2020, including seven in the City & County of Honolulu, 11 in Hawaii County, one in Maui County, and four in Kauai County; all applicants were denied by the respective county's chief of police.

## Confiscations

Two "assault pistols" as defined and prohibited by state law were confiscated by the City & County of Honolulu Police Department's firearm registration personnel in 2020.

## Acknowledgements

This report was prepared with input and assistance from the county police departments' firearm registration personnel. As the volume of registration activity documented in this report demonstrates, these dedicated professionals work hard to serve their communities.

### Hawaii County Police Department

**Arlene Young**, Senior Police Records Clerk  
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### Kauai County Police Department

**Scott Yamaguchi**, Weapons Registration Clerk

### Maui County Police Department

**Melanie Wong**, Firearms Registration Clerk

## Reference

Bureau of Justice Statistics (February 2021). *Background checks for firearms transfers, 2016-2017*. U.S. Department of Justice: Office of Justice Programs. NCJ 254757.