

Firearm Registrations in Hawaii, 2023

Prepared by
Paul Perrone, Chief of Research and Statistics

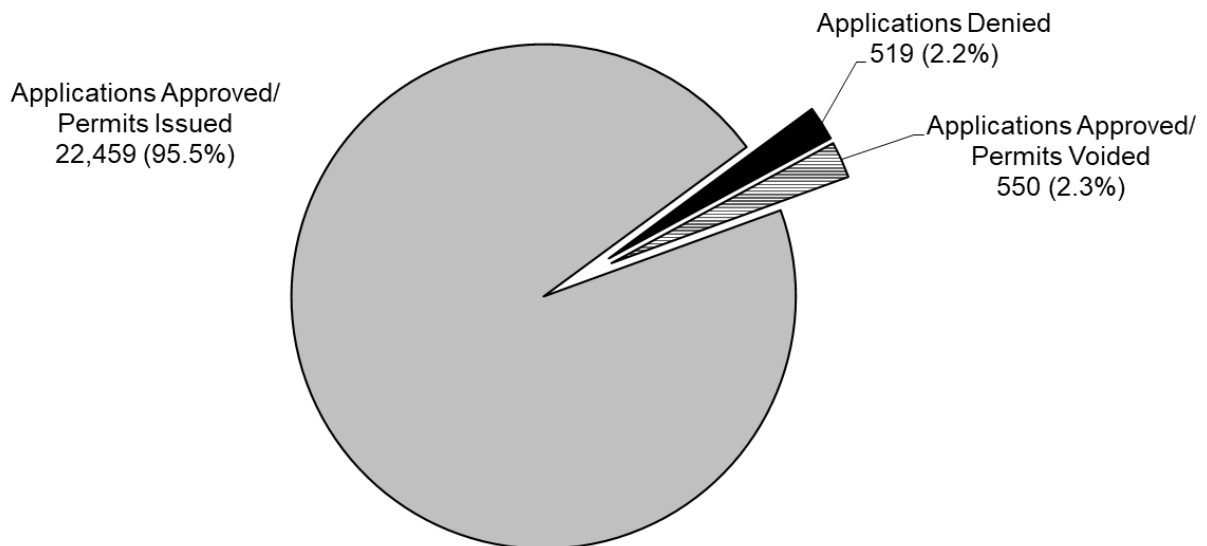
Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS) § 134-14 requires the county police departments to provide to the Department of the Attorney General a monthly report of firearm registration activity. The data from these reports were compiled to provide the statistics presented herein for calendar year 2023. This is the twenty-fourth annual publication of *Firearm Registrations in Hawaii*.

Permit Applications Processed, Issued, Voided, and Denied

A total of 23,528 personal/private firearm permit applications were processed statewide during 2023, marking a 7.5% increase from 21,881 applications processed in 2022. Of the applications processed in 2023, 95.5% were approved and resulted in issued permits, 2.3% were “voided” (canceled/rejected for technical reasons; see note below), and 2.2% were denied due to one or more disqualifying factors. Figure 1 provides additional information. Denials are discussed in greater detail throughout this report.

Figure 1: Firearm Permit Application Outcomes, State of Hawaii, 2023

23,528 Applications Processed



* The definition of voids was expanded this year to include not only the cancellation of approved permits after applicants fail to pick up their permits in timely fashion, but also the rejection of technically incorrect/incomplete application documents.

Registrations and Importations

The 22,459 permits issued statewide in 2023 cover a total of 51,807 firearms registered throughout the year, resulting in a 0.1% decrease from 51,883 firearms registered during 2022. Just over half (26,267, or 50.7%) of the firearms registered during 2023 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 2023 period, a total of 858,019 firearms were registered (including some more than once, by different owners) and 447,435 were imported, while an unknown number of firearms permanently left the state.

Permits and Registrations, by Firearm Type

In the State of Hawaii, single-use permits are issued to acquire specific handguns, while annual permits are issued to acquire an unlimited number of longarms (rifles and shotguns). By firearm type, 57.1% (12,818) of the permits issued during 2023 were to acquire handguns, while 42.9% (9,641) were longarm 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 48.9% (25,344) of all firearms registered during 2023 (51,807). Broken out further, rifles and shotguns comprised 40.0% (20,746) and 8.9% (4,598) of total registrations, respectively. The remaining 51.1% (26,463) of firearms registered throughout 2023 were handguns.

County Comparisons and Registration Trends

Table 1 shows the distribution of firearm registration activity during 2023 across the four counties and for the State of Hawaii overall.

Table 1: Firearm Registration Activity, State of Hawaii and Counties, 2023

	C&C of Honolulu	Hawaii County	Maui County	Kauai County	State Total
Applications Processed	13,699	4,815	3,320	1,694	23,528
Applications Approved/ Permits Issued	13,067	4,483	3,231	1,678	22,459
Applications Approved/ Permits Voided	490	0	48	12	550
Applications Denied	142	332	41	4	519
Denial Rate*	1.0%	6.9%	1.2%	0.2%	2.2%
Firearms Registered	29,748	9,360	7,972	4,727	51,807
Firearms Imported	15,810	4,863	3,831	1,763	26,267

* The most comparable national figures are 6.9% (2019) and 6.0% (2020) denial rates for 715 local law enforcement agencies that conducted background checks for firearm purchases (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2023).

As compared to Hawaii’s resident population distribution (U.S. Census Bureau data), firearm registration activity occurred disproportionately across the four counties during 2023 (see Figure 2). If the counties’ registration activity occurred in equal proportion to their respective population sizes, the three bars depicted for each county in Figure 2 would be of equal value/height.

Figure 2: County Distribution of Permit Applications Processed and Denied versus Resident Population Distribution, 2023

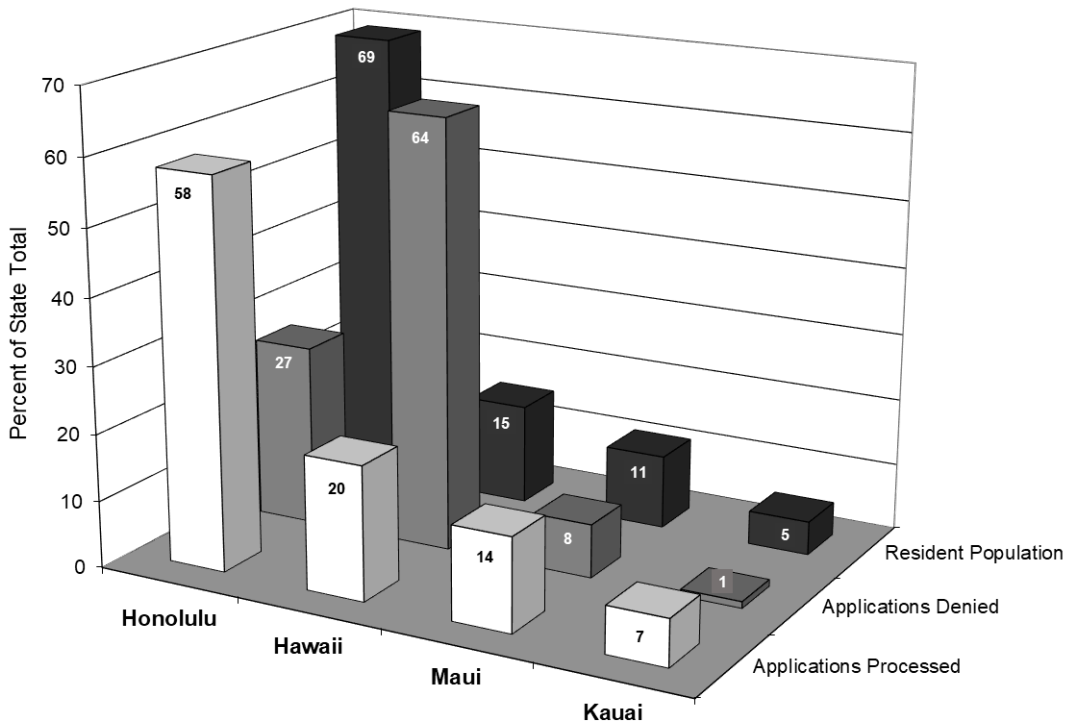
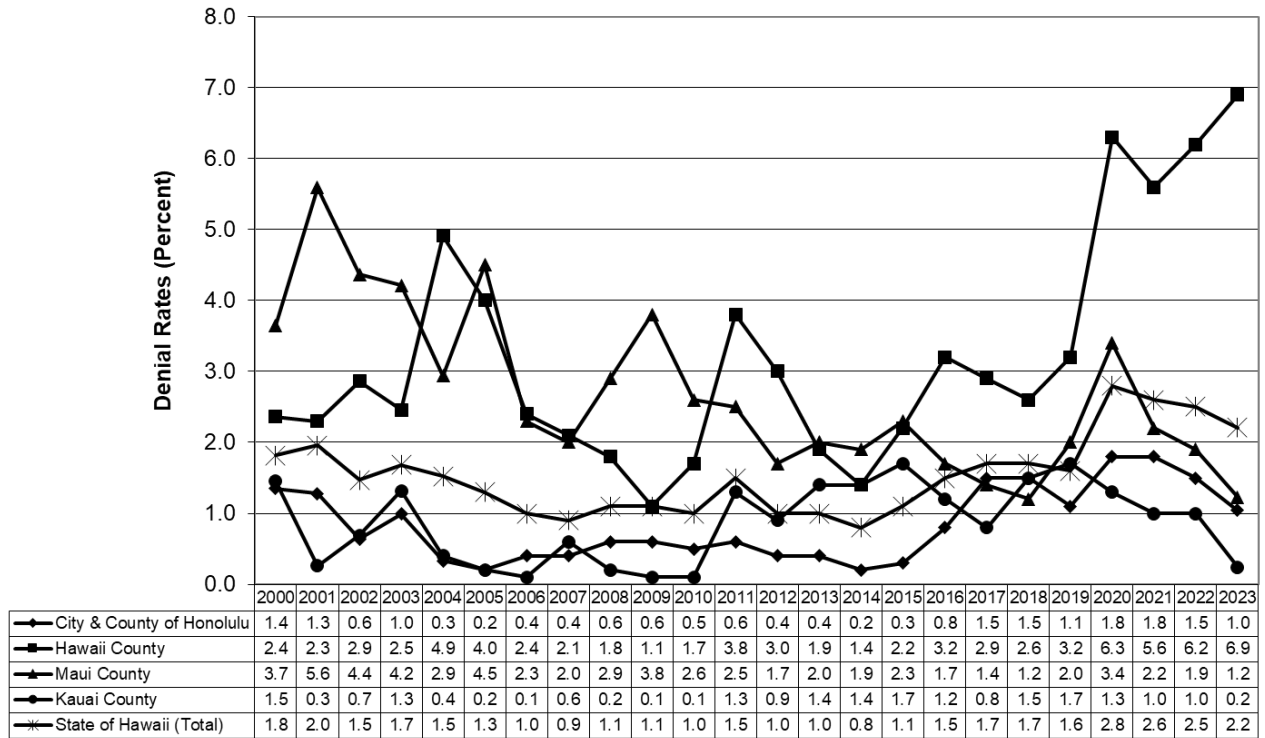


Figure 3 (next page) presents historical data on permit application denial rates for the State of Hawaii and each of the four counties. Hawaii County’s denial rate was the highest in the state for each year since 2016 (and for several of the prior years) and reached a new record high level in 2023.

Figure 3: Firearm Permit Application Denial Rates, State of Hawaii and Counties, 2000-2023



Firearm registration activity increased dramatically over the course of the 24 years for which these data have been systematically compiled and reported (see Figure 4). From 2000 through 2023, the number of statewide permit applications annually processed increased by 262.6%, the number of firearms annually registered leapt by 280.5%, and the number of firearms annually imported climbed 263.4%.

Figure 4: Firearm Registration Trends, State of Hawaii, 2000-2023

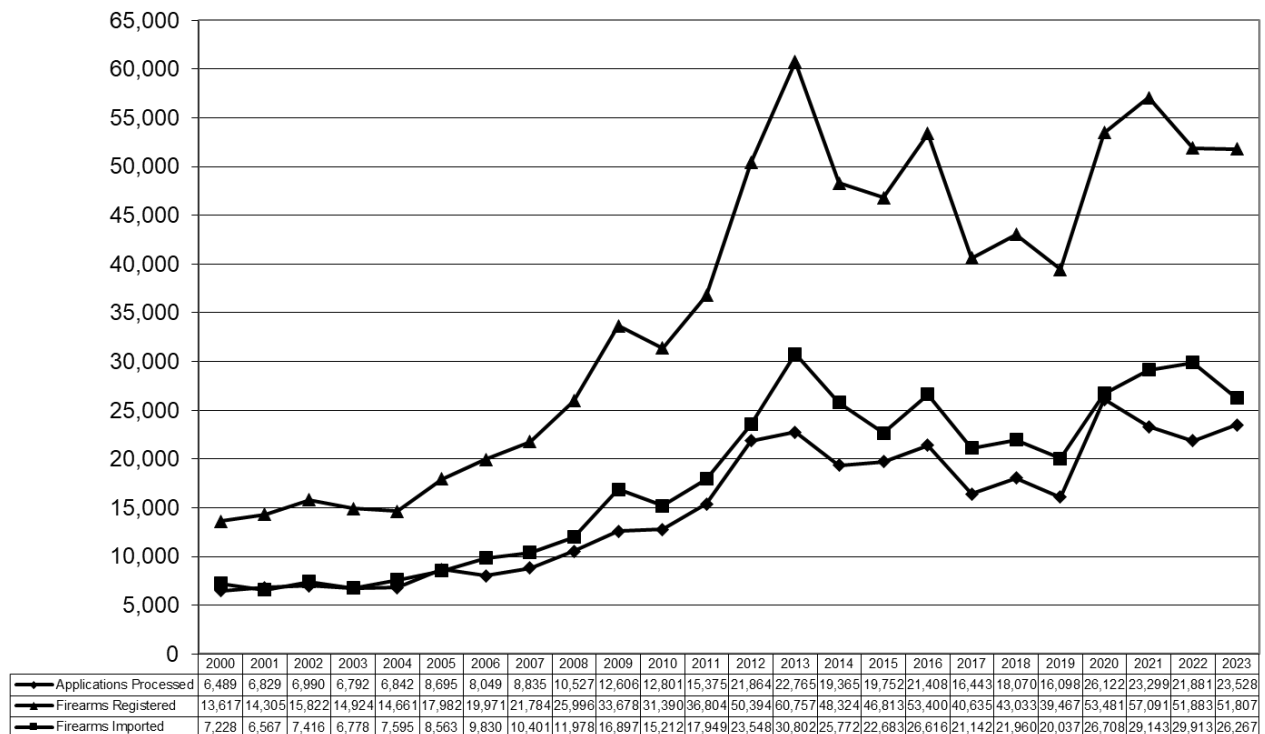
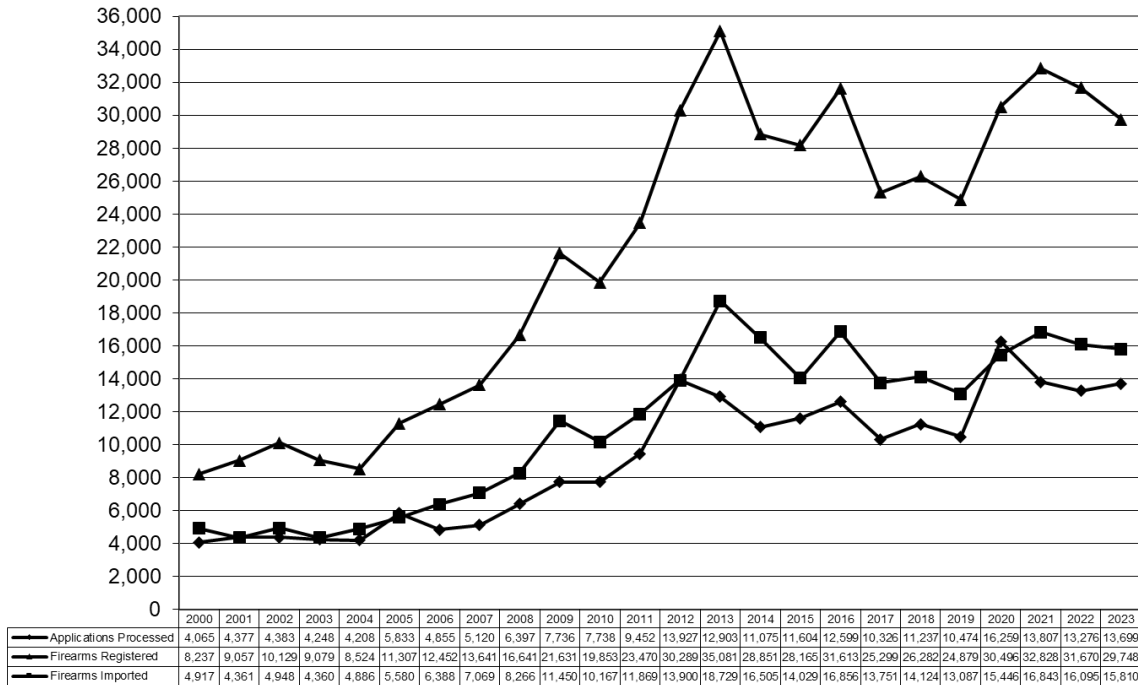


Figure 5 shows that, between 2000 and 2023 in the City & County of Honolulu, the annual tally of permits processed increased by 237.0%, the number of firearms annually registered rose by 261.2%, and the number of firearms annually imported climbed 221.5%.

Figure 5: Firearm Registration Trends, City & County of Honolulu, 2000-2023



As shown in Figure 6, the number of permits processed annually in Hawaii County during the 2000-2023 period surged 320.2%, the number of firearms annually registered increased by 222.4%, and the number of firearms annually imported leapt by 291.9%.

Figure 6: Firearm Registration Trends, Hawaii County, 2000-2023

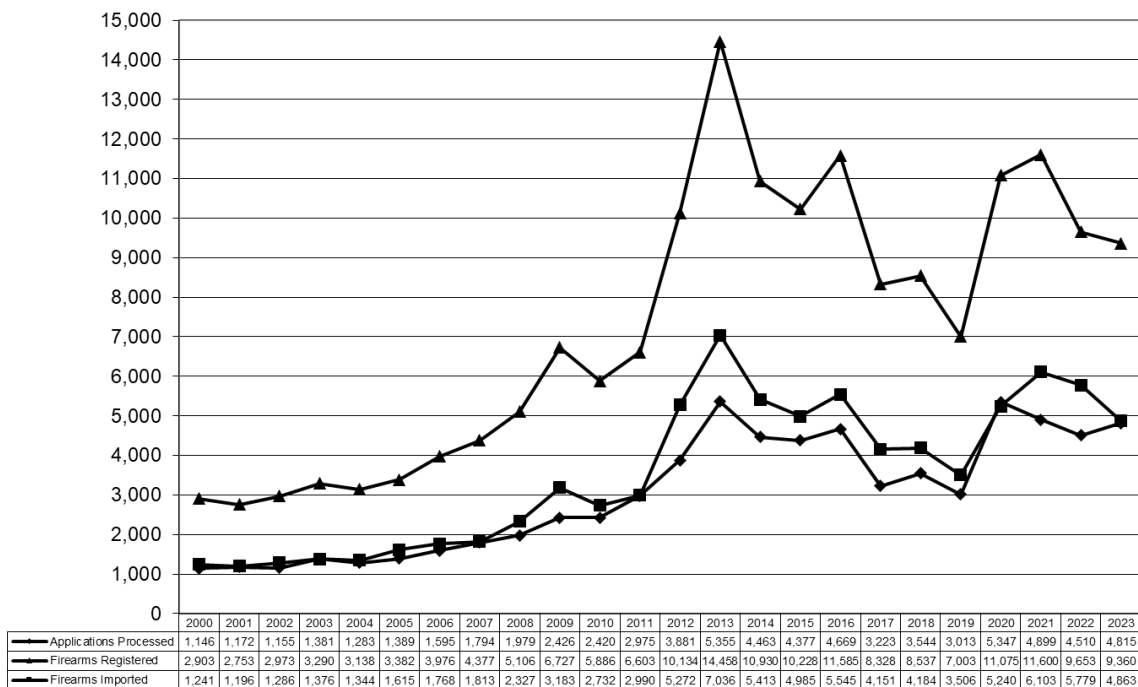
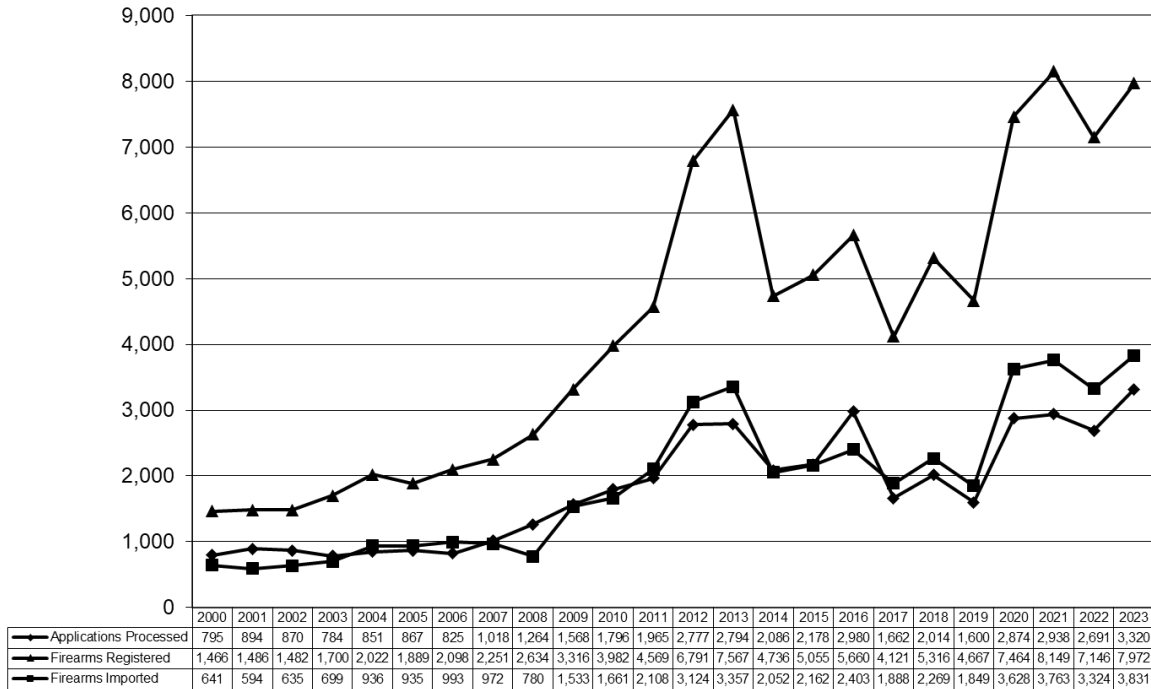


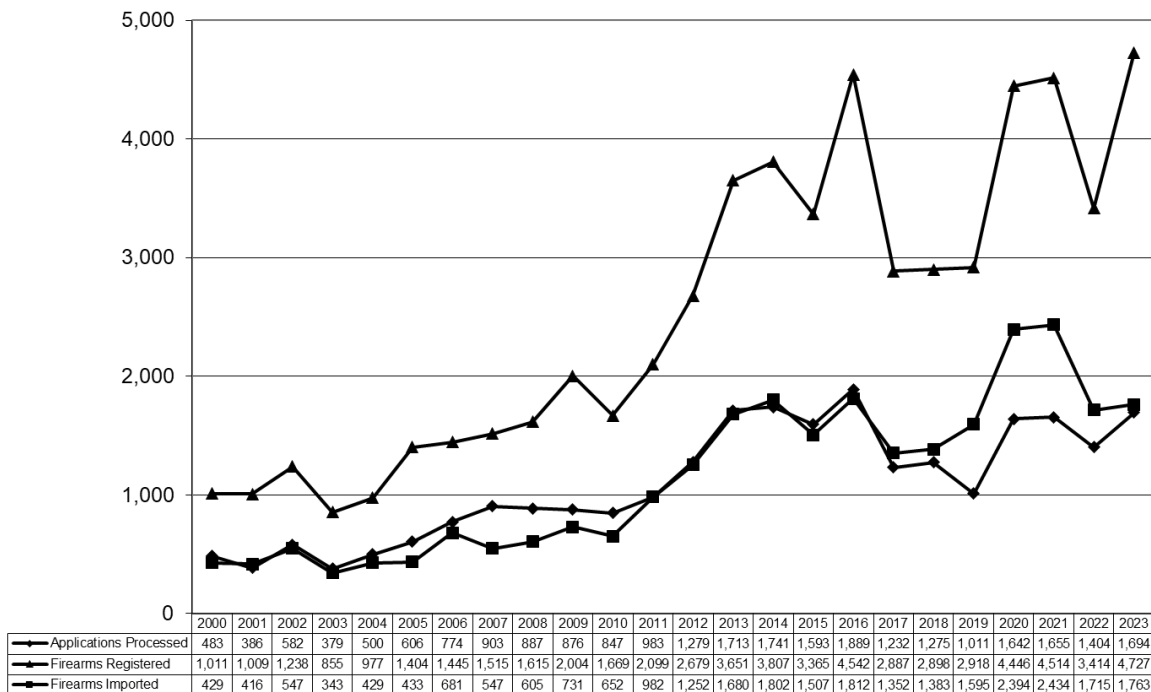
Figure 7 reveals that, between 2000 and 2023 in Maui County, the annual number of permits processed increased by 317.6%, the number of firearms annually registered soared 443.8%, and the tally of firearms annually imported skyrocketed 497.7%.

Figure 7: Firearm Registration Trends, Maui County, 2000-2023



As shown in Figure 8, the number of permits processed annually in Kauai County from 2000 through 2023 increased by 250.7%, the number of firearms registered surged 367.6%, and the number of firearms imported rose by 311.0%.

Figure 8: Firearm Registration Trends, Kauai County, 2000-2023



Permit Application Denials

As noted earlier, 2.2% (519) of the permit applications were denied statewide in 2023. Nearly two-thirds (342, or 65.9%) of the denials were for longarm permit applications rather than handgun permit applications (177, or 34.1%). Following a trend since this annual report was first published, handgun permit applications in 2023 were denied at a rate (1.3%) that is less than half the denial rate for longarm permit applications (3.3%).

Over one-fifth (111, or 21.4%) of the denials in 2023 were due to the applicants' prior criminal convictions, while 0.8% (4) 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 2023, falsified criminal or mental health information, or both, were provided in 66.7% (346) of the 519 denial cases; falsified information pertaining to anything other than criminal or mental health histories was provided in 16.2% (84) of the cases; falsified criminal/mental health information in addition to other falsified information was provided in 0.4% (2) of the cases; and no falsified information was provided in 16.8% (87) 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, 2023

	#	%*
Medical Marijuana**	211	40.7
Mental Health-Related Issue***	133	25.6
Other Criminal Offense	112	21.6
Domestic Violence****	35	6.7
Drug Offense	14	2.7
Disqualifying Juvenile Offense	4	0.8
Restraining/Protective Order	3	0.6
Other Reason (e.g., citizenship issue, dishonorable discharge)	11	2.1

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

** Includes current and former medical marijuana patients. The police departments allow former patients to apply for firearm permits no less than one year after the expiration of their medical marijuana card.

*** Includes adverse mental health diagnoses and treatment, drug or alcohol abuse/addiction and treatment, and other/unspecified reasons provided by healthcare providers. Denials for any of these reasons can be satisfactorily cleared with a verified doctor's note stating that the applicant is not 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 flags 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.

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

Table 3 provides a breakdown of information entered in a description field for each denial in 2023.

Table 3: Descriptions of Firearm Permit Application Denials, State of Hawaii, 2023

	519 Total Denials	#	%*
abuse of family/household member		25	4.8
abuse of family/household member + burglary		1	0.2
abuse of family/household member + medical marijuana		1	0.2
abuse of family/household member + mental health & substance abuse treatment		1	0.2
abuse of family/household member + terroristic threatening		1	0.2
alcohol & substance abuse		5	1.0
alcohol & substance abuse treatment		1	0.2
alcohol abuse + mental health issue		1	0.2
alcohol abuse treatment		4	0.8
alien smuggling		2	0.4
assault		38	7.3
assault (DV)		2	0.4
assault + abuse of family/household member		1	0.2
assault + burglary + terroristic threatening		1	0.2
assault + harassment		1	0.2
assault + medical marijuana		1	0.2
assault + terroristic threatening		1	0.2
battery		5	1.0
battery + terroristic threatening + harassment		2	0.4
battery on a peace officer		1	0.2
burglary		5	1.0
citizenship/residency issue		8	1.5
crime of violence (unspecified)		4	0.8
dishonorable discharge		1	0.2
disorderly conduct		2	0.4
disqualifying juvenile offense		4	0.8
domestic battery		1	0.2
domestic violence conviction (unspecified)		1	0.2
drug offense		13	2.5
DUI		1	0.2
embezzlement		1	0.2
evading a police officer		2	0.4
felonies (unspecified)		1	0.2
felony (unspecified)		4	0.8
felony arrest (unspecified)		1	0.2
felony arrests/no dispositions (unspecified)		1	0.2
felony conviction (unspecified)		4	0.8
felony convictions (unspecified)		5	1.0
firearm training needed		2	0.4
force with a deadly weapon		1	0.2
fugitive of justice (unspecified)		2	0.4
harassment		8	1.5
harassment + medical marijuana		1	0.2
harassment + mental health issue		1	0.2
harassment + warrant		1	0.2
incomplete application		3	0.6
medical marijuana		208	40.1
mental health & substance abuse treatment		1	0.2
mental health issue		44	8.5
mental health issue + disorderly conduct + trespass		1	0.2
mental health issue + substance abuse treatment		2	0.4
mental health treatment		50	9.6
military arrest		2	0.4
motor vehicle theft		1	0.2
motor vehicle theft + drug offenses		1	0.2
positive field test for drugs		2	0.4

reckless endangering	1	0.2
restraining order	3	0.6
robbery + motor vehicle theft	2	0.4
substance abuse	3	0.6
substance abuse treatment	17	3.3
substance abuse treatment + mental health issue	1	0.2
suicide attempts	1	0.2
terroristic threatening + motor vehicle theft + reckless endangering	3	0.6
theft	2	0.4
weapons offense	1	0.2

* 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 2023, 101 employees of private security firms applied for and were issued carry licenses, and two (2.5%) were denied. The police processed a statewide total of 2,468 carry license applications submitted by private citizens in 2023, resulting in 2,421 (98.1%) licenses being approved, and 47 (1.9%) being denied. The breakdown for each county's processing of private citizens' carry license applications in 2023 is as follows: City & County of Honolulu (1,577 licenses approved/zero denials/0.0% denial rate); Hawaii County (291/16/5.2%); Maui County (215/30/12.2%); and Kauai County (347/1/0.3%). The Honolulu Police Department noted separately that a significant proportion of applications still pending at year's end may ultimately result in denials.

The above figures are based on monthly data submitted by the county police departments using the same report forms, terms and definitions, and procedures that have been utilized over the course of this reporting program's 24-year history. They differ significantly from various figures published in this department's initial annual report (see Department of the Attorney General, 2024) for a new carry license reporting program that did not obtain uniform data across the counties and remains under development. Further, it is hoped that legislative revisions next year will result in improved specifications for the new reporting program.

Confiscations

A total of 15 prohibited firearms were confiscated by police firearm registration personnel statewide in 2023, including six "assault pistols," four short-barrel shotguns, and four short-barrel rifles, as defined and prohibited by state law, plus one unserialized rifle receiver. All but one of the confiscations occurred in the City & County of Honolulu, while one of the short-barrel rifles was confiscated in Maui County.

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

Jo-Ann Tallett, Police Records Supervisor
Kerrine Akiona, Senior firearms Registration Clerk
Tricia Ravey, Firearms Registration Clerk
Haley-Rose Kea, Firearms Registration Clerk

City & County of Honolulu Police Department

The entire Firearms Registration Section, in particular:
Suzy Yamasaki, Firearms Registration Clerk

Kauai County Police Department

Scott Yamaguchi, Weapons Registration Clerk

Maui County Police Department

Melanie Wong, Firearms Registration Clerk

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