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**Firearms and Explosives Licensing**

**Annual Statistical and User Satisfaction Publication 2023/2024**

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# Introduction

This report presents statistics on firearm, shotgun and air weapon certificates issued by Police Scotland under the Firearms Acts 1968 (as amended) and Air Weapon and Licensing Scotland Act 2015.

A firearm, shotgun or air weapon certificate is a type of licence issued by Police Scotland that allows the holder to possess firearms, shotguns or air weapons and associated ammunition. Certificates are valid for 5 years.

This publication details certificates on issue at 31st March 2024 and provides information on certificates granted, renewed and refused for all new grant and renewal applications processed between 1st April 2023 and 31st March 2024.

The publication also provides the number of certificates revoked, registered firearm dealers, visitors’ permits, during the period 01st April 2023 to 31st March 2024.

The data cannot at this time be produced by council or geographical area.

Starting from the year 2023/24, Police Scotland have also started to record data relating to performance. This information is contained in the relevant sections of this report. As more data is captured, comparisons with previous years will be reported in future publications.

The statistical information in this report was extracted from SHOGUN which is Police Scotland’s national system for the management of firearms licensing. SHOGUN is a register of all people who have applied for, or have been granted, a certificate to possess or acquire a firearm, shotgun or air weapon. The system is a live operational database which is centrally updated therefore only represents a snapshot of time.

In addition, Police Scotland will now report information captured from our User Satisfaction Survey as part of this publication.

# Firearm, Shotgun and Air Weapon Certificates on Issue

The information below reflects the number of certificates which were on issue in Scotland on 31 March 2024.

Firearm certificates

* There were 25145 firearm certificates on issue as at 31 March 2024.

Shotgun certificates

* There were 43809 shotgun certificates on issue as at 31 March 2024.

Air Weapon certificates

* There were 31970 air weapon certificates on issue as at 31 March 2024.

# 1. Firearms

## 1.1 Weapons covered by firearm certificates.

* There were 110343 firearms covered by firearm certificates as at 31 March 2024. Firearms can be categorised as rifles, handguns, muzzle-loading handguns, Section 1 shotguns, sound moderators and other firearm types.

## 1.2 New applications, renewals and revocations.

* There were 889 new applications for firearm certificates in the year from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024, of which 873 were granted and 16 refused.
* 79.6% of new applications were concluded within 16 weeks.
* There were 2669 renewal applications for firearms certificates in the year from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 of which 2666 were granted and 3 refused.
* 96.6% of renewal applications were concluded before expiry.
* A total of 38 firearms certificates were revoked in the year from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024

Firearm certificates can be revoked if, for example, the Chief Constable of Police Scotland is satisfied that the holder can no longer be entrusted with firearms in accordance with the [Firearms Act 1968](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1968/27/contents).

# 2. Shotguns

## **2.1 Weapons covered by shotgun certificates**.

* There were 132323 shotguns covered by shotgun certificates as at 31 March 2024.

## 2.2 New applications, renewals and revocations.

* There were 1256 new applications for shotgun certificates in the year from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 of which 1227 were granted and 29 refused.
* 77.7% of new applications were concluded within 16 weeks.
* There were 4549 renewal applications for shotgun certificates in the year from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 of which 4544 were granted and 5 refused.
* 95.8% of renewal applications were concluded before expiry.
* A total of 58 shotgun certificates were revoked in the year from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024.

Shotgun certificates can be revoked if, for example the Chief Constable of Police Scotland is satisfied that the holder can no longer be entrusted with shotguns, in accordance with the [Firearms Act 1968](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1968/27/contents).

# 3. Air Weapons

3.1 Weapons covered by air weapon certificates.

The Air Weapon and Licensing (Scotland) Act 2015 does not require the registration of individual weapons and therefore there is no data relating to the number of weapons covered by air weapon certificates.

3.2 New applications, renewals and revocations.

* There were 1419 new applications for air weapon certificates in the year from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024, of which 1391 were granted and 28 refused.
* 83.3% of new applications were concluded within 16 weeks.
* There were 5224 renewal applications for air weapon certificates in the year from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 of which 5217 were granted and 7 refused.
* 96.8% of renewal applications were concluded before expiry.
* A total of 56 air weapon certificates were revoked in the year from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024.

# 4. Registered Firearm Dealers

There were 332 registered firearm dealers in Scotland as at 31 March 2024.

* There were 9 new applications for registration in the year from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024, of which 9 were granted and 0 refused.
* 100% of new applications were concluded within 16 weeks.
* There were 78 renewal applications for registration in the year from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 of which 0 were refused.
* 97.4% of renewal applications were concluded before expiry.

# 5. Visitors’ Permits

Visitors’ permits allow visitors to Great Britain to possess a firearm, shotgun, air weapon or ammunition without holding a certificate. Visitors’ permits are usually granted enabling the holder to attend organised shoots such as deer stalking or competitive target shooting events. The following information relates to visitors’ permits issued in Scotland.

There were 943 visitors’ permits granted for firearms as at 31 March 2024.

There were 2891 visitors’ permits granted for shotguns as at 31 March 2024.

There were 78 visitors’ permits granted for air weapons as at 31 March 2024.

# Table: Visitors permit yearly statistical comparison

# 6. User Satisfaction 2023/2024

**6.1 About the survey**

* Police Scotland recognises the importance of understanding the views and priorities of those who use the firearms and explosives licensing service. Whilst our aim is to meet our statutory responsibilities in respect of the legislation, we are keen to gauge user satisfaction with the service provided.
* In April 2019 we launched our first ever Firearms and Explosives Licensing User Satisfaction Survey to engage with members of the public who use the service. The survey was conducted over a 12-month period and closed late March 2020 by which time 100 responses had been received. Feedback was analysed and a report produced outlining the nature of the responses. Keen to understand further the views of our users, the survey has run annually since.
* The survey was re-launched again in November 2022 and extended to close in March 2024 to align with the financial tax year in line with other performance reports. This survey closed with 93 responses.
* Again, the survey consisted of 12 questions, 10 pre-coded and two free-text and was made available via Police Scotland’s Citizen Space platform. Participation was sought from all certificate holders who used our services during this period by the licensing staff and Firearms Enquiry Officers.

# 6.2 What the public said

* Whilst 93 responses only represents a small percentage of our certificate holders, the responses were very useful in gauging the level of satisfaction with the service as well as identifying areas where it is perceived improvements can be made.
* We received a good spread of response from across Scotland: 42% from the North, 30% from the East, 29% from the West.
* 62% of respondents said they were applying for the renewal of their certification; 22% applying for a grant for the first time; 8% were amending the number/type of weapons or volume of ammunition held; 4% for an additional certificate; and 4% selected “other.”
* A strong majority of respondents (82%) said they were satisfied or very satisfied with the overall application process whilst 13% said they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the service.
* 86% said it was easy to get information from Police Scotland about how to apply for the grant, renewal or variation of a Certificate/Permit or other service they applied for. 86% said it was easy or very easy to fill in the application forms. 87% said it was easy or very easy to contact Police Scotland's Firearms and Explosives Licensing Unit. 80% stated they were satisfied with the speed and efficiency of the service whilst 11% said they were not satisfied.
* The majority of the respondents (90%) felt that the officers and staff they dealt with were knowledgeable and professional whilst 6% were dissatisfied with the interaction with officers and staff.
* Respondents were thereafter given the opportunity to comment on how the service could be improved or provide and further relevant feedback. 73 comments overall were received from the two free-text questions, 22% of which contained positive feedback on the service received which has been conveyed to individual staff members where they have been named.
* Where respondents felt improvements were necessary, the following areas were highlighted:
	+ Poor Police Scotland website – 32% (with suggestions for a more joined up portal and a streamlined process for renewals, online payment and digital signatures.)
	+ Application process too slow – 26% (With some respondents wanting some form of update/progress meter. Some respondents mentioned feeling worried about their new Certificate coming after renewal date).
	+ Legislative issues in relation to the requirement for an Air Weapons Certificate – 4%
	+ The costs associated with providing information from their General Practitioner (GP) – 4%
	+ Difficulty in contacting both the licensing function and Firearms Enquiry Officers – 5%