

Statistical Bulletin

Crime and Justice Series

A National Statistics Publication for Scotland

FIREARM CERTIFICATE STATISTICS, SCOTLAND, 2011 29 May 2012



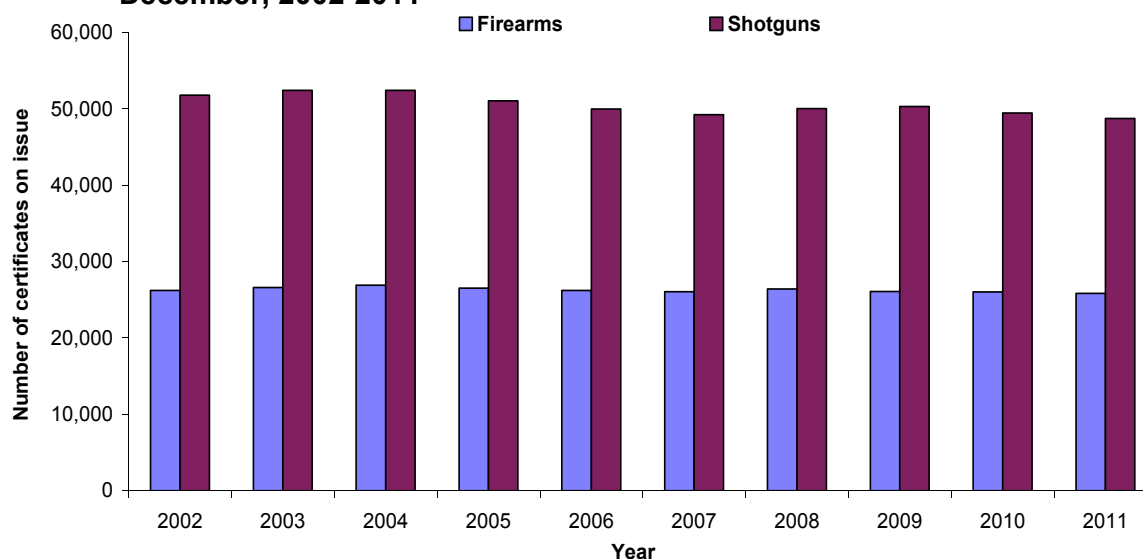
1. Introduction

This bulletin is part of a [series of bulletins](#) produced by the Scottish Government on the criminal justice system. It presents information on the number of firearm and shotgun certificates on issue under the Firearms Act 1968 (as amended), covering certificates issued by the eight Scottish police forces over the last ten years. The bulletin also provides information on the number of registered firearm dealers, visitor permits and European Firearm Passes (EFP) issued.

In this bulletin, statistics for shotguns are shown separately from other firearms. The definition of a firearm and of a shotgun are provided in the [Annex](#), along with regulations covering firearms licensing and further background information on the data presented in this bulletin. A related publication provides statistics on the number of crimes and offences involving the *alleged* use of a firearm. The National Statistics bulletin [Recorded Crimes and Offences Involving Firearms, Scotland, 2010-11](#), was last published in October 2011.

For both firearms and shotguns, the number of certificates on issue at the end of 2011 are now at their lowest levels in the ten year period covered by this bulletin ([Chart 1](#)).

Chart 1 Number of firearm and shotgun certificates on issue in Scotland as at 31 December, 2002-2011



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2. Main Points

It should be noted that amendments to firearm regulations in January 1995 increased the validity period of firearm and shotgun certificates from three to five years. This effectively meant that there were no certificate renewals in either 1998 or 1999 and this in turn has had a cyclical effect of increasing the number of certificate renewals, cancellations and certificates on issue in certain years, whilst reducing the number in the intervening years.

- There were 25,831 firearm certificates on issue at the end of 2011, the lowest number of firearm certificates on issue over the ten year period covered by this bulletin. ([Table 1](#) and [Chart 1](#))
- The 25,831 firearm certificates on issue at the end of 2011 covered the possession of 71,860 firearms, the highest number of firearms held on certificate over the last ten years. This is an increase of 19 per cent in the number of firearms held on certificate since 2002. ([Table 1](#))
- The average number of firearms held on each certificate issued has increased from 2.3 in 2002 to 2.8 in 2011. ([Table 1](#))
- There were 48,726 shotgun certificates on issue at the end of 2011, the lowest number of shotgun certificates on issue over the ten year period covered by this bulletin. ([Table 4](#))
- The 48,726 shotgun certificates on issue at the end of 2011 covered the possession of 138,939 shotguns, the highest number of shotguns held on certificate over the last ten years. This is an increase of 13 per cent in the number of shotguns held on certificate since 2002. ([Table 4](#))
- The average number of shotguns held on each certificate issued has increased from 2.4 in 2002 to 2.9 in 2011. ([Table 4](#))
- There were 347 registered firearm dealers in Scotland at the end of 2011. This is the highest number of registered dealers in the last ten year period and an increase of three per cent from the 337 registered dealers at the end of 2010. ([Table 6](#))

3. Commentary

3.1 Firearm Certificates

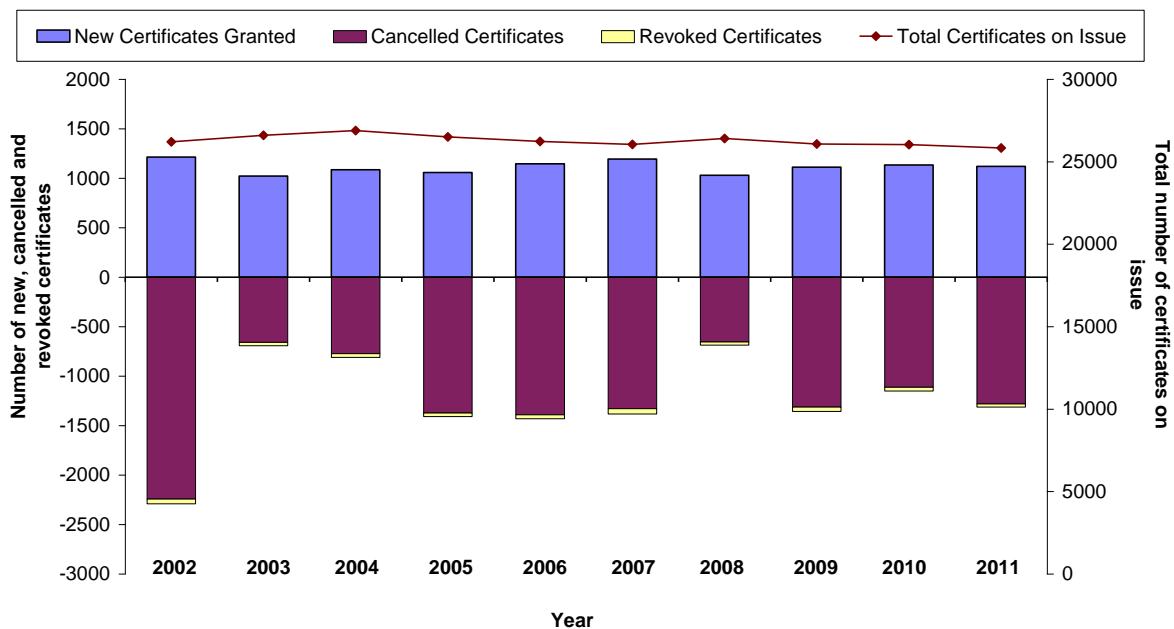
([Table 1](#), [Table 2](#), [Table 2A](#), [Table 3](#), [Chart 2](#) and [Chart 4](#))

3.1.1 There were 25,831 firearm certificates on issue at the end of 2011, a decrease of less than one per cent from 2010, and the lowest number of firearm certificates on issue over the last ten years.

3.1.2 The number of firearms held on certificate increased by two per cent, from 70,410 in 2010 to 71,860 in 2011 (see [Annex 5.9](#)). This is the highest number of firearms held on certificate over the ten years covered by this bulletin and is 19 per cent higher than the 60,599 held on certificate in 2002.

3.1.3 Although the number of firearm certificates on issue are at their lowest level in ten years, the figures have remained relatively stable over the period. In contrast, the number of firearms held on certificate has shown an increasing trend, with the average number of firearms held on each certificate rising from 2.3 in 2002 to 2.8 in 2011.

Chart 2 New firearm certificate applications (granted), cancellations, revocations and total number on issue in Scotland as at 31 December, 2002-2011



3.1.4 In 2011, there were 1,141 applications for a new firearm certificate, a decrease of one per cent on the 1,152 applications in 2010. Of the total number of applications for a new firearm certificate in 2011, 1,121 were granted with 20 applications (two per cent) being refused.

3.1.5 In 2011, there were 6,393 applications for the renewal of a firearm certificate, with only eight of those applications being refused.

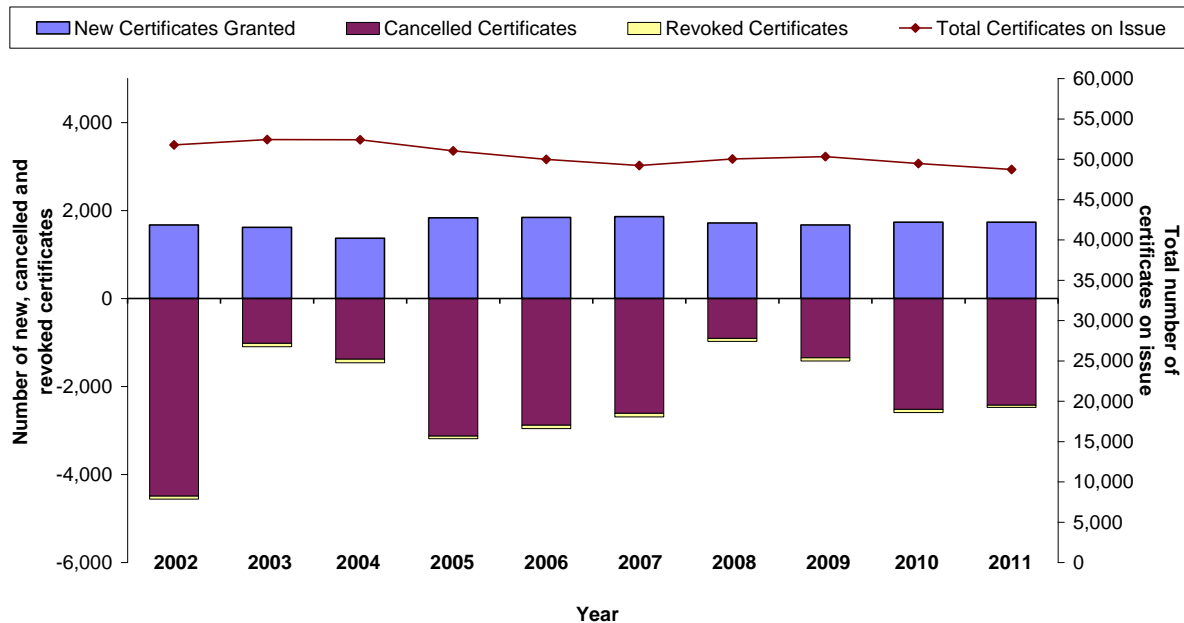
- 3.1.6 There were 1,279 firearm certificates cancelled and 32 certificates revoked in 2011, compared to 1,112 cancellations and 38 revocations in 2010. The number of cancellations and revocations outnumbered the new applications granted by 190, thus contributing to a reduction in the overall number of firearm certificates on issue for the third consecutive year.
- 3.1.7 Over a quarter (6,674) of all firearm certificates on issue at the end of 2011 were in Northern Constabulary. Grampian police force contained the second highest number of firearm certificates (4,501), followed by Strathclyde (3,806) and Lothian & Borders police forces (3,642).
- 3.1.8 In 2011, the number of firearm certificates on issue per head of population was highest in Northern Constabulary (2,299 per 100,000 population) and lowest in Strathclyde police force (171 per 100,000 population). This is not unexpected given that those police forces with the highest number of firearm certificates on issue per head of population relate to the more rural areas of Scotland, where populations are lower and employment and recreational activities may require the use of firearms.
- 3.1.9 The 25,831 firearm certificates on issue as at 31 December 2011 covered the possession of 71,860 firearms. In addition, the certificates on issue were authorised a further 9,057 firearms to be purchased or acquired (see [Table 3](#) and [Annex 5.9](#)).
- 3.1.10 Of the 54,551 firearms held on certificate where it was possible to distinguish the weapon type, the majority (83 per cent) were rifles (see [Annex 5.7](#)).

3.2 Shotgun Certificates

([Table 4](#), [Table 5](#), [Table 5A](#), [Chart 3](#) and [Chart 4](#))

- 3.2.1 There were 48,726 shotgun certificates on issue at the end of 2011, a decrease of one per cent from 2010 and the lowest number on issue in the ten year period cover by this bulletin.
- 3.2.2 The 48,726 shotgun certificates on issue at the end of 2011 covered the possession of 138,939 shotguns. This is a decrease of two per cent from the 135,987 shotguns held on certificate at the end of 2010 and the highest number over the last ten years.
- 3.2.3 The average number of shotguns held on each certificate issued has increased from 2.4 in 2002 to 2.9 in 2011.
- 3.2.4 In 2011, there were 1,777 applications for a new shotgun certificate, of which 1,736 were granted and 41 (two per cent) were refused.

Chart 3 New shotgun certificate applications (granted), cancellations, revocations and total number on issue in Scotland as at 31 December, 2002-2011



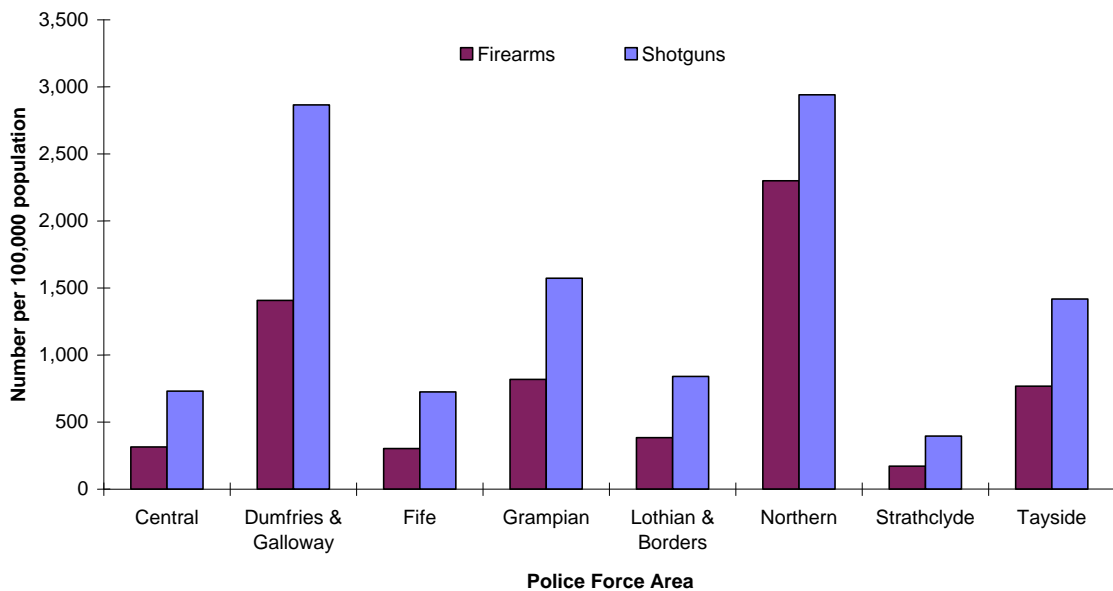
3.2.5 There were 12,449 applications for a renewal of a shotgun certificate in 2011, with only nine of those applications refused.

3.2.6 In 2011, a total of 2,422 shotgun certificates were cancelled, which accounted for nearly five per cent of all shotgun certificates from the previous year. There were 52 shotgun certificates revoked in 2011, a reduction on the 71 certificates revoked in 2010. The number of cancellations and revocations outnumbered the new applications granted by 738, thus contributing to a reduction in the number of shotgun certificates on issue for the second consecutive year.

3.2.7 Strathclyde police force area contained the highest number of shotgun certificates (8,800) on issue in 2011. This was closely followed by 8,663 shotgun certificates on issue in Grampian and 8,536 in Northern.

3.2.8 However, per head of population, the number of shotgun certificates on issue was highest in Northern Constabulary (2,940 per 100,000 population) and lowest in Strathclyde police force (396 per 100,000 population). Again, this is not unexpected given that those police forces with the highest number of shotgun certificates on issue per head of population relate to the more rural areas of Scotland, where populations are lower and employment and recreational activities may require the use of shotguns.

Chart 4 Number of firearm and shotgun certificates on issue per 100,000 population, Scotland, as at 31 December 2011



3.3 Firearm Dealers

([Table 6](#) and [Table 7](#))

3.3.1 There were 347 registered firearm dealers in Scotland at the end of 2011, an increase of three per cent from the 337 registered dealers in 2010 and the highest number of registered dealers over the last ten years.

3.3.2 In 2011, there were 32 new applications granted for registration from firearm dealers, with 80 renewal of registration applications granted. There were no refusals for either new registration or renewal applications, although 23 registrations were cancelled.

3.3.3 The number of registered dealers per head of population was highest in Dumfries and Galloway and in Northern Constabulary (22 firearm dealers per 100,000 population) and lowest in Lothian & Borders police force (3 firearm dealers per 100,000 population).

3.4 Visitor Permits

([Table 8](#))

3.4.1 In 2011, a total of 2,109 firearm applications for a Visitor Permit were submitted by EC and non-EC residents, an eight per cent decrease on the 2,298 applications submitted in 2010 (see [Annex 5.13](#)).

3.4.2 In 2011, a total of 4,306 shotgun applications for a Visitor Permit were submitted by EC and non-EC residents. This is a one per cent decrease on the 4,367 applications submitted in 2010 (see [Annex 5.13](#)).

3.5 European Firearm Passes

[\(Table 9\)](#)

- 3.5.1 There were 1,451 European Firearm Passes on issue at the end of 2011, an increase of six per cent on the 1,363 on issue at the end of in 2010 (see [Annex 5.13](#)).
- 3.5.2 In 2011, a total of 166 new applications were issued for a European Firearm Pass, with 163 renewals issued and 78 cancellations.
- 3.5.3 The number of European Firearm Passes on issue in 2011 was highest in Strathclyde police force (424) and lowest in the Fife police force area (39).

3.6 Article 7 Authorities

[\(Table 10\)](#)

- 3.6.1 There were no applications (granted) for Article 7 Authorities made by certificate holders or non-certificate holders in 2011.

4. Appendix of Tables

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Table 1. Firearm Certificates: number of new applications (granted and refused), firearm certificates on issue and firearms held in Scotland as at 31 December, 2002-2011

Year	Applications for new firearm certificates ¹		Firearm certificates on issue	Firearms held on certificate
	Granted	Refused		
2002	1,214	17	26,212	60,599
2003	1,023	14	26,605	60,440
2004	1,086	12	26,897	63,115
2005	1,059	18	26,511	63,710
2006	1,147	9	26,234	66,164
2007	1,194	9	26,056	66,893
2008	1,030	13	26,415	69,481
2009	1,112	12	26,072	70,856
2010	1,135	17	26,035	70,410
2011	1,121	20	25,831	71,860

1. See [Annex 5.4](#).

Table 2. Firearm Certificates: new applications, renewals, variations, cancellations, revocations and number of firearm certificates on issue by police force area, Scotland, 31 December 2011

Police Force Area	Applications						Cancellations ³	Revocations ³	Firearm certificates on issue	Firearm certificates on issue per 100,000 population ³
	New Firearm Certificate		Renewal of Firearm Certificate		Variation of Firearm Certificate ¹					
	Granted	Refused	Granted	Refused	Fee Charged ²	No Fee Charged				
Central	27	-	235	-	35	30	46	-	923	314
Dumfries & Galloway	63	1	488	-	91	71	107	-	2,086	1,408
Fife	49	1	270	-	32	49	69	1	1,107	303
Grampian	163	-	1,060	-	151	121	237	-	4,501	817
Lothian & Borders	177	3	859	1	99	152	180	17	3,642	383
Northern	283	6	1,720	6	259	562	276	8	6,674	2,299
Strathclyde	195	2	898	-	206	67	205	2	3,806	171
Tayside	164	7	855	1	146	Unknown	159	4	3,092	768
SCOTLAND	1,121	20	6,385	8	1,019	1,052	1,279	32	25,831	495

1. See [Annex 5.3](#).

2. See [Annex 5.22](#).

3. See [Annex 5.8](#).

4. Based on mid-2010 population estimates for Scotland ([General Register Office for Scotland](#)).

Table 2A. Firearm Certificates: cancellations and revocations in Scotland as at 31 December, 2002-2011

Firearm Certificates	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Number of certificates on issue	26,212	26,605	26,897	26,511	26,234	26,056	26,415	26,072	26,035	25,831
Number of cancellations^{1,2}	2,241	657	772	1,372	1,389	1,327	653	1,312	1,112	1,279
Percentage of certificates cancelled from previous year	8.2	2.5	2.9	5.1	5.2	5.1	2.5	5.0	4.3	4.9
Number of revocations²	48	34	37	35	41	55	32	43	38	32
Percentage of certificates revoked from previous year ³	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.1

1. See [Annex 5.4](#).
2. See [Annex 5.8](#).
3. The percentage of certificates revoked as at 31 December 2010 was incorrectly reported as 0.2 in the previous bulletin. This figure has been revised to 0.1.

Table 3. Firearm Certificates: number of firearms possessed on certificate and number of additional firearms authorised to be purchased or acquired on certificate, Scotland, 31 December 2011

	Type of Weapon										Weapons in Tayside Police ⁶
	Section 1 Shotgun ²	Rifle	Handgun ³	Carbine		Muzzleloader		Air weapon ⁴		Miscellaneous ⁵	
				Under Lever	Bolt Action	Rifle	Handgun	Rifle	Handgun		
Possessed¹	1,746	45,412	621	180	11	172	493	309	181	5,426	17,309
Authorised to be purchased/acquired	293	5,027	58	6	4	40	143	105	-	1,276	2,105
Total	2,039	50,439	679	186	15	212	636	414	181	6,702	19,414

1. See [Annex 5.9](#) and [Annex 5.10](#).
2. Any smooth-bore gun which has a barrel of less than 24 inches in length, has a magazine which takes more than two cartridges or has a removable magazine.
3. Includes those weapons which were exempt from the Firearms (Amendment)(No 2) Act 1997, e.g. single shot humane killers, shot pistols, grade 1 starters, trophies of war, antique firearms and 'handguns' used by the SSPCA.
4. See Annex [5.17](#).
5. Includes weapons such as Section 5 firearms, tranquillising rifles, etc.
6. See Annex [5.7](#).

Table 4. Shotgun Certificates: number of new applications (granted and refused), shotgun certificates on issue and shotguns held in Scotland as at 31 December, 2002-2011

Year	Applications for new shotgun certificates ¹		Shotgun certificates on issue	Shotguns held on certificate
	Granted	Refused		
2002	1,672	46	51,778	122,551
2003	1,618	38	52,421	125,395
2004	1,369	31	52,409	129,218
2005	1,833	26	51,029	129,630
2006	1,844	18	49,974	132,181
2007	1,860	31	49,213	133,940
2008	1,716	33	50,021	137,881
2009	1,671	22	50,308	137,768
2010	1,735	37	49,449	135,987
2011	1,736	41	48,726	138,939

1. See [Annex 5.4](#).

Table 5. Shotgun Certificates: applications, renewals, cancellations, revocations and number of shotgun certificates on issue by police force area, Scotland, 31 December 2011

Police Force Area	Applications				Cancellations ¹	Revocations ¹	Shotgun certificates on issue	Number & Rate	
	New Shotgun Certificate		Renewal of Shotgun Certificate					Shotgun certificates on issue per 100,000 population ²	
	Granted	Refused	Granted	Refused					
Central	77	1	535	-	111	-	2,147	731	
Dumfries & Galloway	117	4	1,065	-	191	1	4,245	2,865	
Fife	98	1	643	-	146	3	2,648	725	
Grampian	241	1	2,231	1	461	1	8,663	1,573	
Lothian & Borders	321	11	1,917	3	342	22	7,979	840	
Northern	312	10	2,254	5	401	13	8,536	2,940	
Strathclyde	341	4	2,176	-	487	4	8,800	396	
Tayside	229	9	1,619	-	283	8	5,708	1,418	
SCOTLAND	1,736	41	12,440	9	2,422	52	48,726	933	

1. See [Annex 5.8](#).

2. Based on mid-2010 population estimates for Scotland ([General Register Office for Scotland](#)).

Table 5A. Shotgun Certificates: cancellations and revocations in Scotland as at 31 December, 2002-2011

Shotgun Certificates	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Number of certificates on issue	51,778	52,421	52,409	51,029	49,974	49,213	50,021	50,308	49,449	48,726
Number of cancellations^{1,2}	4,492	1,016	1,378	3,125	2,879	2,608	907	1,348	2,519	2,422
Percentage of certificates cancelled from previous year	8.2	2.0	2.6	6.0	5.6	5.2	1.8	2.7	5.0	4.9
Number of revocations²	67	78	83	58	77	83	65	71	71	52
Percentage of certificates revoked from previous year	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1

1. See [Annex 5.4](#).

2. See [Annex 5.8](#).

Table 6. Firearm Dealers: new applications for registration (granted and refused) and number of firearm dealers registered in Scotland as at 31 December, 2002-2011
Number

Year	New applications for registration from dealers		Registered dealers
	Granted	Refused	
2002	33	-	285
2003	16	1	284
2004	18	1	280
2005	24	-	275
2006	26	-	283
2007	44	6	301
2008	39	-	327
2009	29	-	335
2010	35	-	337
2011	32	-	347

Table 7. Firearm Dealers: applications, renewals, cancellations and number of firearm dealers registered by police force area, Scotland, 31 December 2011

Police Force Area	Applications				Cancellations	Registered Dealers ¹	Registered dealers per 100,000 population ²
	New Registration		Renewal of Registration				
	Granted	Refused	Granted	Refused			
Central	-	-	-	-	-	11	4
Dumfries & Galloway	2	-	9	-	1	32	22
Fife	2	-	9	-	-	22	6
Grampian	6	-	13	-	4	53	10
Lothian & Borders	7	-	8	-	6	26	3
Northern	9	-	11	-	4	63	22
Strathclyde	2	-	14	-	7	80	4
Tayside	4	-	16	-	1	60	15
SCOTLAND	32	-	80	-	23	347	7

1. The number of firearm dealers registered at the end of the year may not equal the number of new registrations added to the previous end of year total, minus refused registration renewals and cancellations, as it is possible for dealers to be removed from the register if a danger to public safety is identified, etc. In 2009, one firearms dealer in Strathclyde had their licence revoked.
2. Based on mid-2010 population estimates for Scotland ([General Register Office for Scotland](#)).

Table 8. Visitor Permits¹: number of applications from EC and non-EC residents by police force area, Scotland, 31 December 2011

Police Force Area	Applications				Total Applications	
	EC Residents		Non-EC Residents		Firearms	Shotguns
	Firearms	Shotguns	Firearms	Shotguns		
Central	62	25	5	2	67	27
Dumfries & Galloway	104	198	8	13	112	211
Fife	47	188	-	7	47	195
Grampian	306	466	46	65	352	531
Lothian & Borders	130	258	14	51	144	309
Northern	671	966	46	107	717	1,073
Strathclyde	406	240	4	1	410	241
Tayside	260	1,673	-	46	260	1,719
SCOTLAND	1,986	4,014	123	292	2,109	4,306

1. See [Annex 5.24](#) and [Annex 5.25](#).

Table 9. European Firearm Passes¹: new applications, renewals, variations, cancellations and number of European Firearm Passes on issue by police force area, Scotland, 31 December 2011

Police Force Area	Applications Issued			Cancellations	European Firearm Passes on issue
	New European Firearm Pass ²	Renewal of European Firearm Pass	Variation of European Firearm Pass ³		
Central	10	15	-	10	67
Dumfries & Galloway	14	24	-	8	103
Fife	6	10	-	6	39
Grampian	26	45	-	13	202
Lothian & Borders	24	24	6	3	381
Northern	11	20	7	21	72
Strathclyde	64	-	-	5	424
Tayside	11	25	6	12	163
SCOTLAND	166	163	19	78	1,451

1. See [Annex 5.6](#).
2. An applicant for a European Firearm Pass must hold a valid firearm or shotgun certificate.
3. Variation refers only to the insertion or deletion of firearm particulars on the European Firearm Pass.

Table 10. Article 7 Authorities¹: number of applications (granted) in Scotland by certificate and non-certificate holders and for possession outside the UK as at 31 December, 2002-2011

Year	Number of Applications (Granted)		
	Certificate Holders	Non-Certificate Holders	For Possession Outside UK
2002	1	-	-
2003	-	-	-
2004	-	-	-
2005	1	-	-
2006	3	-	-
2007	2	-	-
2008	-	-	-
2009	1	-	-
2010	-	-	-
2011	-	-	-

1. See [Annex 5.26](#).

5. Annex: Notes on Statistics Used in this Bulletin

Definitions:

5.1 Within the definition of the Firearms Act 1968 (as amended), a “**firearm**” means a lethal barrelled weapon of any description from which any shot, bullet or other missile can be discharged. It includes any prohibited weapon, any component part of such a weapon and any accessory to such a weapon designed or adapted to diminish the noise or flash caused by the firing of the weapon.

It is – with certain statutory exceptions – an offence to possess, purchase, or acquire any firearm or ammunition to which Section 1 of the Firearms Act 1968 applies without holding a *firearm certificate*.

Section 1 of the 1968 Act applies to all firearms except a shotgun or an air gun.

A “**shotgun**” is defined as a smooth-bore gun (not being an air gun) which: (i) has a barrel not less than 24 inches in length and does not have any barrel with a bore exceeding two inches in diameter; (ii) either has no magazine or has a non-detachable magazine incapable of holding more than two cartridges; and (iii) is not a revolver gun. Other smooth-bore guns may require a firearm certificate.

It is – with certain statutory exceptions – an offence for a person to possess, purchase, or acquire any shotgun without holding a *shotgun certificate*.

Accuracy of the statistics:

5.2 The statistics presented in this bulletin are provided by each of the eight Scottish police forces in an annual aggregate return to the Scottish Government’s Justice Analytical Services Division.

5.3 The current recording process within the Tayside Police area allows the retrieval of information for variations for which a fee is charged. It does not provide details of ‘one for one’ variations nor requests for authority to possess additional firearms submitted as part of a renewal or grant application. The formula previously used for recording such figures has been reviewed and is no longer considered to be robust enough to accurately reflect the number of one to one variations within the Tayside Police area.

5.4 A software problem in 2005 and 2006 affected the data submitted by Fife Constabulary. Subsequently, the number of applications, variations and cancellations for both firearm and shotgun certificates are not wholly consistent with the totals reported. The force resolved the problem for the provision of 2007 data.

5.5 A software problem in 2009 affected the European Firearm Passes (EFP) data submitted by Dumfries and Galloway Constabulary. The number of EFP cancellations in 2009 has been revised to six (replacing the previously published figure of five), thus reducing the total number of passes in force at the end of the year to 90.

5.6 Strathclyde police force introduced a new Firearms Licensing System (SHOGUN) on 31 March 2010. At present, the system is unable to distinguish between grants of new European Firearm Passes and renewal/variation applications. As a result, all EFP applications issued have been treated as a new European Firearm Pass.

5.7 For technical reasons, Tayside police force is unable to provide a breakdown of firearms by weapon type.

5.8 The cancellation of a firearm or shotgun certificate is undertaken by the holder; revocations are at the authority of the Chief Constable and occur in instances where it is believed that the holder should no longer be allowed to possess a weapon.

5.9 A firearm or shotgun certificate permits the holder to possess one or more weapons, thus changes in the number of certificates will not necessarily reflect changes in the number of weapons held legally.

5.10 It is accepted that the total number of firearms covered by certificates will include an element of double counting, i.e. two or more individuals may each hold a certificate which permits them to possess the same firearm weapon. A certificate allows the holder to either possess or authorises them to purchase or acquire a weapon or a number of weapons.

5.11 The population data used to calculate the rate figures provided in Tables 2, 5 and 7 are the mid-2010 population estimates prepared by the General Register Office for Scotland:

<http://www.gro-scotland.gov.uk/statistics/theme/population/estimates/mid-year/2010/index.html>.

5.12 The percentage figures provided in Tables 2A and 5A have been independently rounded and may not always sum to the relevant sub-totals or totals.

5.13 The following data (taken from [Firearm Certificate Statistics, Scotland, 2010](#)) does not feature in this bulletin but was referred to for contextual purposes:

- number of applications for Visitors' Permits from both EC and non-EC residents in 2010 for firearms and shotguns;
- number of European Firearm Passes on issue in 2010.

5.14 The following symbol is used throughout the tables in this bulletin.

– = nil

Regulations on the issue of firearm and shotgun certificates:

5.15 All persons acquiring or in possession of a firearm or shotgun must have a certificate issued by the Chief Constable for the police force area in which the person lives, unless they are otherwise exempt. Persons sentenced to any form of custody for a period of three years or more may be prohibited from possessing firearms for a period of up to life, depending upon the sentence.

5.16 There are certain conditions applicable to weapons covered by Section 1 of the Firearms Act 1968 and Section 2 of the Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988 (which includes rifles, large magazine smooth bore guns, and especially dangerous air weapons). In particular, the Chief Constable must be satisfied that an applicant has good reason for wanting a weapon, is fit to be entrusted with it and that the public safety or the peace will not be endangered. The certificate lists the number, type and serial number of each weapon held and any conditions attached (a standard condition is that weapons and ammunition are held in a secure place when not in use).

5.17 A certificate is only required for air weapons that are of a type declared by the Secretary of State under the Dangerous Air Weapons Rules 1969 (as amended) to be specifically dangerous. The vast majority of air weapons held in Scotland do not require a certificate. Since 20 January 2004 the sale, manufacture and import of Self Contained Air Cartridge (SCAC) air weapons has been banned. Individuals had until 30 April 2004 to surrender these weapons or apply for a licence. This has had the result of significantly increasing the number of air weapons possessed on certificate compared to previous years.

5.18 Shotgun certificates covered by Section 2 of the 1968 Act and Section 2 of the 1988 Act permit the holder to possess any number of shotguns, which can include pump-action and self-loading weapons which have a magazine which is incapable of holding more than two cartridges but excluding large magazine smooth bore guns. Applications may not be granted or renewed if a Chief Constable has reason to believe that the applicant is prohibited by the Firearms Acts from possessing a shotgun. Nor may applications be granted or renewed unless the Chief Constable is satisfied that the applicant can be permitted to possess a shotgun without danger to public safety or to the peace (Section 3 of the 1988 Act). The certificate specifies the description of the shotguns including, if known, the identification numbers of the guns.

5.19 Certain types of weapons (e.g. machine guns) are prohibited under Section 5 of the 1968 Act, as amended by Section 1 of the 1988 Act; their possession can only be authorised by the Secretary of State or Scottish Ministers after careful enquiries by the police.

5.20 Following the Dunblane incident in 1996, changes to the existing firearms legislation were introduced to enhance public safety. As a result, the Firearms (Amendment) Act 1997 was implemented and thereafter the Firearms (Amendment)(No.2) Act 1997. Under these Acts, all pistols (otherwise referred to as "handguns") were banned. A number of types of handgun were exempted from the Act including muzzle-loading guns, shot pistols, slaughtering instruments, firearms used for the humane killing of animals, trophies of war etc.

Regulations on the renewal, cancellation, revocation, and variation of firearm and shotgun certificates:

5.21 It should be noted that amendments to firearm regulations in January 1995 increased the validity period of firearm and shotgun certificates from three to five years. This effectively meant that there were no certificate renewals in either 1998 or 1999 and this in turn has had the cyclical effect of both increasing the number of certificate renewals, cancellations and certificates on issue in certain years, whilst reducing the number in the intervening years.

5.22 To alter the number and type of weapons held on a firearm certificate, an application for a variation must be made to the Chief Constable. A fee is charged where the variation increases the number of firearms authorised by the certificate. The expiry date of a shotgun certificate can be aligned with the holder's firearm certificate (Section 11 of the 1988 Act).

Regulations on firearm dealer certificates:

5.23 Section 13 of the 1988 Act increased the registration period for firearm dealers from one to three years. The grounds for refusal for new applications for registration were extended and a register of transactions must be retained for at least 5 years. The Violent Crime Reduction Act 2006 introduced a requirement for anyone selling or transferring air weapons by way of trade and/or business to register with the police as a firearms dealer. This requirement came into effect on 1 October 2007, although businesses were able to start the registration process from 6 April 2007.

Regulations on Visitor Permits and European Firearm Passes:

5.24 The Firearms Act (Amendment) Regulations 1992, which came into force on 1 January 1993, amended firearms legislation in Great Britain to meet the requirement of the EC Weapons Directive, which controls the acquisition and possession of weapons in EC Member States.

5.25 There is no charge for a Visitor Permit variation when an amendment is made to the existing conditions specified on the permit (excluding numbers of firearms authorised and expiry date). If a change is required which increases the number of firearms or shotguns authorised on the permit, or which extends the expiry date of the permit, then this is treated as a new application.

5.26 From January 1993, any EC resident who wants to buy or acquire a category B firearm (e.g. short and semi-automatic rifles, carbines and smooth bore guns) in another EC State must, unless they are exempt under the EC Firearms Directive, be able to show that they have the agreement of the authority within their state of residence to purchase or acquire a firearm in another EC State. This agreement is obtained from the local Chief Constable for the area in which they reside and is called an Article 7 Authority. Information relating to the authority of a person to purchase or acquire a firearm/shotgun when in another EC State was first collected centrally in 1994.

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