


12 April 2024

IR-01-24-9097

s.9(2)(a) OIA



Thank you for your Official Information Act 1982 (OIA) request dated 15 March 2024, where you asked for information relating to firearms licences that have been cancelled, suspended or revoked in the last ten years.

By way of background, the mission of Te Tari Pūreke – Firearms Safety Authority is to make firearms use in Aotearoa the safest in the world by effectively implementing the regulations in accordance with the law to oversee lawful firearms possession in New Zealand.

The Arms Act 1983 (the Act) provides a regulatory framework which seeks to protect the public from the harm that may be caused by the misuse of firearms. Under the Act, firearms possession is limited to those who are fit and proper to possess firearms, use them safely and responsibly, and who comply with their legislative responsibilities.

Please refer to section 24A of the Act which sets out the circumstance when an applicant may be found not fit and proper to hold a licence by Te Tari Pūreke:

<https://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1983/0044/latest/LMS440359.html>

Section 27 of the Act outlines the circumstances where a firearms licence may be revoked: <https://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1983/0044/latest/DLM72928.html>.

*How many firearms licenses have been cancelled/revoked in the last decade?
Can I please request this information broken down by year, over the 10 year period.*

Please refer to Table 1 below which provides a breakdown of individual firearms licences revoked and dealer firearms licences revoked from 2013 to 2023.

Table 1: Number of individual firearms licences and dealer firearms licences revoked from 2013 to 2023

Year of Revocation	Individual Firearms Licences Revoked	Dealer Firearms Licences Revoked
2013	568	0
2014	525	1
2015	580	1
2016	485	2
2017	491	1
2018	529	0
2019	506	1
2020	783	3
2021	1,160	1
2022	826	6
2023	896	2
Total	7,349	18
Total distinct count of licence holders¹	7,241	18

Source: National Intelligence Application (NIA), retrieved 19 March 2024.

Note that when a licence is revoked, the revoked status in the Police National Intelligence Application (NIA) must remain in place until either the revocation has been overturned or the licence holder has applied to have their licence reinstated after the mandatory five year stand down period.

Due to how the system records all status changes, any human errors and corrections made cannot be excluded and so, for example, a licence may appear as having two separate revocation occurrences rather than one. To provide the data excluding these would require Police to manually search each individual revocation occurrence to identify and assess the information in scope. Therefore, Police is refusing this part of your request under section 18(f) of the OIA, as the information requested cannot be made available without substantial collation and research.

¹'Total distinct count of licence holders' provides the count of unique licences across all years regardless of how many revocations an individual has had. The Total field provides the number of licences that may have been revoked multiple times (e.g., a licence revoked in 2018, then reinstated, and then revoked again in 2020, will show as one in Total distinct count, but two in Total).

In addition, please refer to Table 2 below which provides a breakdown of individual and dealer firearms licences cancelled from 2013 to 2023.

Table 2: Number of individual firearms licences cancelled, and dealer firearms licences cancelled from 2013 to 2023

Year of Cancellation	Individual Firearms Licences Cancelled	Dealer Firearms Licences Cancelled
2013	1,464	7
2014	1,571	3
2015	5,473	5
2016	1,961	4
2017	1,663	5
2018	1,113	6
2019	1,062	3
2020	1,458	3
2021	1,394	3
2022	2,504	3
2023	1,783	5
Total	21,446	47
Total distinct count of licence holder²	21,439	47

Source: National Intelligence Application (NIA), retrieved 19 March 2024.

A “cancelled” status is also used for other administrative situations such as an incorrect licence type created, or a duplicate licence created in error.

However, the main reason firearms licences are cancelled are when Police receive notification of the death of a firearms licence holder. Deceased notifications may be received through various avenues such as the Department of Internal Affairs (Births, Deaths, and Marriages) or when Police attend a sudden death. Strict processes are in place to manage the cancellation of a firearms licence and ensure any arms items are dealt with by way of disposal or transfer. Please note, the data in Table 2 does not reflect specific circumstances where a licence holder dies after their licence has expired, for which their licence status in NIA is updated to ‘expired and explanation’ instead of ‘cancelled and is not included in the data in table 2.

² ‘Total distinct count of licence holders’ provides the count of unique licences across all years regardless of how many cancellations an individual has had. The Total field includes licences that may have been cancelled multiple times (e.g. a licence cancelled in 2018, then reinstated, and then cancelled again in 2020, will show as one in Total distinct count, but two in Total).

Have many firearms licenses have been suspended in the last decade? As above, can I request this information broken down by year, over the 10 year period.

Please refer to Table 3 below which provides a breakdown of individual and dealer firearms licences suspended from 2013 to 2023. Please note, the data in Table 3 does not reflect suspensions at the endorsement level, where the licence remains in some other status. Licences can be suspended multiple times in a given year or across multiple years. These numbers are a unique count of licences that were suspended per calendar year; however, their status may have since changed.

Table three: Number of individual firearms licences suspended and dealer firearms licences suspended from 2013 to 2023

Year of Suspension	Individual Firearms Licences Suspended	Dealer Firearms Licences Suspended
2013	36	0
2014	41	0
2015	17	0
2016	22	0
2017	29	0
2018	24	0
2019	28	0
2020	127	0
2021	1,339	3
2022	1,146	8
2023	1,386	5
Total	4,195	16
Total distinct count of licence holders³	4,098	15

Source: National Intelligence Application (NIA), retrieved 19 March 2024.

The increase in total licenses suspended between 2020 and 2021 can be attributed to the establishment of the national Compliance Team (now the Firearms Resolutions Team),

³ 'Total distinct count of licence holders' shows the count of unique licences across all years regardless of how many suspensions an individual has had. The 'total' field includes licences that may have been suspended multiple times (e.g. a licence suspended in 2018, then reinstated, and then suspended again in 2020, will show as one in 'distinct total' and two in 'total').

which manages various compliance workstreams, including the temporary suspension and revocation process. The combination of the legislation changes, and the implementation of the national oversight team enabled a consistent approach to assessing and managing temporary suspensions and revocations following the legislation change, which is reflected in the increase of suspensions post 2020.

New sections 27B, 27C and 60A to 60C were inserted into the Act as part of the Arms Legislation Act 2020⁴ enabling the temporary suspension of a firearms licence.

Suspensions prior to this amendment were managed within each District Arms Office and licences were generally only given a suspension due to specific circumstances, such as the issuing of a temporary protection order, which automatically suspended a licence.

Can I please request a breakdown of the most common reasons for the cancellations or suspensions? General categories is fine for this.

An additional field was created within the NIA database on 30 October 2023 to enable the recording and subsequent reporting of the specific section of the Act that the reason for a suspension related to.⁵ Due to this, only firearms licence suspensions that occurred after this date have a specific reason captured in the data. There is no field in NIA that captures the reason a licence is changed to a cancelled status. To provide the information sought prior to 30 October 2023 or the reason for a cancellation would require Police to manually search each individual cancellation or suspension occurrences to identify and assess the information in scope. Therefore, Police is refusing this part of your request under section 18(f) of the OIA, as the information requested cannot be made available without substantial collation and research.

Please refer to Table 4 below which provides the most common reasons under the Act where a firearms licence had been suspended and their percentage of total suspensions⁶, from 30 October 2023 to 1 March 2024.

Table four: Common reasons for firearms licence suspensions under the Act, by section and percentage, from 30 October 2023 to 1 March 2024

Section of the Arms Act 1983	Percentage of total
24A(2)(c): In determining whether a person is a fit and proper person to be in possession of a firearm or an airgun, the member of the Police may take into account any other relevant matters the member of the Police considers appropriate	20%
24A(1)(g): if a person has engaged in any conduct involving non-compliance with any requirements of (i) this Act; or (ii) any regulations made under this Act; or (iii) any conditions to which a permit, licence, or endorsement previously issued	18%

⁴ <https://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2020/0023/latest/LMS256810.html#LMS256808>

⁵ There are 23 possible suspension reasons available, each reason relates specifically to a section of the Arms Act 1983. Multiple reasons can be selected per suspension.

⁶ A total of 553 reasons have been applied to a total of 271 suspensions between 30 October 2023 and 1 March 2024. The percentage is rounded to one decimal point and is based on the 'total reasons per section' / 'total reasons' rather than the total suspensions e.g., section 24A(2)(c) of the Act was selected a total of 112 times therefore 112 of 553 = 20%.

24A(1)(h): if a person shows, or has recently shown, symptoms of a mental or physical illness or injury that may adversely affect their ability to safely possess firearms	17%
24A(1)(a): if a person is charged with or has been convicted of an offence in New Zealand or overseas that is punishable by a term of imprisonment	16%
24A(1)(i): if a person abuses alcohol, or is dependent on alcohol, to an extent that affects detrimentally their judgement or behaviour	11%

Source: National Intelligence Application (NIA), retrieved 19 March 2024.

Of those who had their licenses cancelled/revoked or suspended -- how many faced prosecution?

The data does not capture which charges against a person specifically relates to a suspension and or revocation of a firearms licence. To provide the data would require Police to manually search each individual cancellation, revocation or suspension occurrence to identify and assess the information in scope. Therefore, Police is refusing this part of your request under section 18(f) of the OIA, as the information requested cannot be made available without substantial collation and research.

Of those who had their firearms licenses revoked -- how many of them reapplied and had their license restored, following the stand-down period?

When a licence is revoked, the licence status is changed to a 'revoked' status in NIA and the licence holder has 28 days to apply for a review of the decision.⁷ Depending on the outcome of the review, a revocation may be upheld, or overturned and therefore the licence reinstated.

Following an upheld outcome, a licence holder may further appeal this in court. A licence may go through multiple licence status changes during this process. If a revocation is upheld or a review/appeal not made, the licence holder cannot reapply again for another five years.

Due to how these are recorded in our system, and the multiple licence status changes a revoked licence may go through, to identify licence holders that have waited five years before reapplying, and who have had their licence reinstated would require Police to manually search each individual revoked licence entries to identify and assess the information in scope. Therefore, Police is refusing this part of your request under section 18(f) of the OIA, as the information requested cannot be made available without substantial collation and research.

⁷ Section 62 Right of review of official decisions

(1) This section applies to a decision to refuse an application for, or to revoke, a firearms licence.

(2) A person who is the subject of a decision to which this section applies may apply in the prescribed manner to the Commissioner for a review of the decision.

(4) An application must, subject to subsection (5), be made within 28 days after the date on which notice of the relevant decision is given to the person.

(5) The Commissioner may accept a late application no later than 28 days after the closing date in subsection (4) if satisfied that there are extenuating circumstances that affected the ability of the claimant to make the application by the closing date.

However, the data captures total revocations which can be broken down by year and active or non-active licence holder. Please refer to Table 5 below which provides a breakdown of total firearms licences revoked, including active licence holders and non-active licence holders, from 2013 to 2023.

Table five: Number of firearms licences revoked, broken down by active licence holders and non-active licence holders, from 2013 to 2023

Year of Revocation	Total Firearms Licences Revoked ⁸	Active Licence Holder	Non-Active Licence Holder
2013	568	89	479
2014	526	76	450
2015	581	78	503
2016	487	64	423
2017	492	67	425
2018	529	52	477
2019	507	32	475
2020	786	42	744
2021	1,161	101	1,060
2022	832	61	771
2023	898	73	825
Total	7,367	735	6,632
Total distinct count of licence holders⁹	7,259	717	6,542

Source: National Intelligence Application (NIA), retrieved 19 March 2024.

“Active licence holder” figures provide an indication of licence holders that have been previously revoked and had their licence subsequently reinstated. These reinstated licences can be attributed to various reasons such as the revocation overturned, or the licence holder has waited the mandatory five years to reapply and has subsequently been

⁸ This includes both individual and dealer licences.

⁹ ‘Total distinct count of licence holders’ shows the count of unique licences across all years regardless of how many revocations an individual has had. The ‘total’ field includes licences that may have been revoked multiple times (e.g. a licence revoked in 2018, then reinstated, and then revoked again in 2020, will show as one in ‘distinct total’ and two in ‘total’).

issued a licence. "Non-Active licence holder" figures provide an indication of those licence holders that have been previously revoked and do not currently hold a licence¹⁰.

Please also explain any relevant caveats that should be kept in mind when analysing this information.

Please refer to the respective caveat footnotes contained in each of the five tables provided in the response.

The data contained in this response is drawn from a dynamic operational database and is subject to change as new information is recorded or updated.

You have the right to ask the Ombudsman to review this decision if you are not satisfied with the response to your request. Information about how to make a complaint is available at: www.ombudsman.parliament.nz.

For your information, Police has developed a process for proactive release of information, so the anonymised response to your request may be publicly released on the New Zealand Police website.

Nāku noa, nā



Matt Boddy
Acting Director Operations
Firearms Safety Authority

¹⁰ This does not identify any changes that have occurred between the date of revocation and the data capture date i.e. a licence holder may have had their licence reinstated and subsequently expired, revoked again, or are deceased.