



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2011-01262

Keyword: Organisational Information/Governance

Subject: Legally Held Firearms

Request and Answer:

This is to inform you that the Police Service of Northern Ireland has now completed its search for the information you requested. The decision has been taken to disclose the located information to you in full.

Question 1

How many legally-held firearms have been used in crimes each year for the past three years?

Question 2

How many of these had been reported stolen beforehand?

Answer

As previously advised, Statistics Branch can only provide the number of recorded offences where a firearm was involved in the incident. We cannot state whether or not the firearm was legally held and cannot provide any information in relation to whether or not the firearm was stolen beforehand.

Please see the table below, detailing recorded offences where a firearm was involved in the incident in 2008/2009, 2009/2010 and 2010/2011.

Year	Recorded ¹
2008/09	545
2009/10	530
2010/11	473

Source: Central Statistics Unit, PSNI

¹ The figures relate to crimes where a firearm was involved in the incident – it is not known how the firearm was actually used or whether the firearm was discharged.

Please Note:

These figures are based on operational information taken from a live crime recording system and may be subject to change.

Question 3

How many legally-held firearms have been stolen each year for the past three years and what types of firearms were they?

Answer

Please see the table below, detailing types of firearms stolen in 2008, 2009 and 2010.

FIREARM TYPE	2008	2009	2010
Shotguns	49	67	84
Air Rifles	11	8	17
Handguns	2	4	13
Full Bore Rifles	3	4	2
Small Bore Rifles	14	15	13
*Miscellaneous	2	9	3
Total	81	107	132

Note: * Relates to spare barrels and sound moderators.

Question 4

How many applications for a license have been rejected each year for the past three years?

You previously clarified that the term 'rejected' referred to applications not granted.

Answer

Please see the table below, detailing the number of refusals in 2008, 2009 and 2010.

YEAR	NUMBER OF REFUSALS
2008	228
2009	271
2010	147

Question 5

How many firearm licenses have been held in Northern Ireland each year for the past three years?

Answer

The PSNI follow legislation set out in the Firearms (NI) Order 2004 in relation to firearm certificates. The control of firearms in Northern Ireland is exercised by the Chief Constable. Before a person can be authorised to hold a firearm certificate, the Chief Constable must be satisfied that the applicant:

- Is not prohibited by law from possessing a firearm, is not of intemperate habits or unsound mind and is not, for any reason, unfit to be entrusted with a firearm.
- Has good reason for purchasing, acquiring or having in their possession the firearm or ammunition in respect of which the application is made.
- Can be permitted to have that firearm or ammunition in their possession without danger to public safety or to the peace.

Firearm certificates are only issued when specified criteria has been met.

Please see the table below, detailing the number of firearms certificates held in 2008, 2009 and 2010.

YEAR	NUMBER OF CERTIFICATES
2008	62391
2009	61981
2010	61565

Question 6

How many individual firearms does this cover?

Question 7

What is the geographical spread of these firearms?

Answer

Please see the table entitled Geographical Breakdown of Firearms, at the end of this correspondence, detailing the District Command Area and the number of firearms as at 24 May 2011.

If you have any queries regarding your request or the decision please do not hesitate to contact me on 028 9070 0164. When contacting the Freedom of Information Team, please quote the reference number listed at the beginning of this letter.

If you are dissatisfied in any way with the handling of your request, you have the right to request a review. You should do this as soon as possible, or in any case within two months of the date of issue of this letter. In the event that you require a review to be undertaken, you can do so by writing to the Head of Freedom of Information, PSNI Headquarters, 65 Knock Road, Belfast, BT5 6LE or by emailing foi@psni.pnn.police.uk.

If following an internal review, carried out by an independent decision maker, you were to remain dissatisfied in any way with the handling of the request you may make a complaint, under Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act, to the Information Commissioner's Office and ask that they investigate whether the PSNI has complied with the terms of the Freedom of Information Act. You can write to the Information Commissioner at Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF. In most circumstances the Information Commissioner will not investigate a complaint unless an internal review procedure has been carried out, however the Commissioner has the option to investigate the matter at his discretion.

Please be advised that PSNI replies under Freedom of Information may be released into the public domain via our website @ www.psnipolice.uk

Personal details in respect of your request have, where applicable, been removed to protect confidentiality.

GEOGRAPHICAL BREAKDOWN OF FIREARMS at 24.05.11

DISTRICT COMMAND AREA	NUMBER OF FIREARMS
North Belfast	1027
West Belfast	695
South Belfast	918
East Belfast	1068
North Down	3233
Ards	7761
Down	7100
Castlereagh	2710
Lisburn	7412
Antrim	4957
Carrickfergus	1672
Newtownabbey	3113
Newry & Mourne	7684
Armagh	7913
Banbridge	6372
Craigavon	6964
Cookstown	6135
Dungannon & South Tyrone	8259
Fermanagh	9214
Omagh	6231
Foyle	3298
Strabane	4821
Limavady	3358
Magherafelt	6961
Coleraine	4333
Ballymena	7929
Ballymoney	3311
Larne	3501
Moyle	1979
Total	139,929