



# Firearm and shotgun certificates in England and Wales, financial year ending 31 March 2018

As at 31 March 2018, compared with the previous year, there were:

- **157,581** firearm certificates on issue, an **increase** of 2% (2,623)
- **567,047** shotgun certificates on issue, an **increase** of 1% (5,634)
- **586,583** people held a firearm and/or a shotgun certificate; an **increase** of 1% (5,925)

In the year ending 31 March 2018, there were:

- **9,696** new applications for firearms, of which 98% were granted and 2% were refused
- **24,584** new applications for shotgun certificates, of which 97% were granted and 3% were refused
- **345** firearms certificates revoked; a **decrease** of 4% (-13) compared with the previous year
- **1,082** shotgun certificates revoked; a **decrease** of 11% (-134) compared with the previous year

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Date published:  
5 July 2018

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## 1. Introduction

This release presents statistics on firearm and shotgun certificates issued by police forces in England and Wales under the Firearms Act 1968 (as amended). A firearm or shotgun certificate is a type of licence, issued by the police, that allows the holder to possess firearms or shotguns and associated ammunition in Great Britain. Firearm and shotgun certificates are valid for 5 years.

This release covers certificates on issue as at 31 March 2018, as well as historical trend data and police force comparisons. The release also provides information on certificates granted and refused for new and renewal applications, certificates revoked, registered firearm dealers, visitors' permits, European Firearms Passes (EFP) and Article 7 Authorities issued. It also includes experimental statistics on the number of people who hold a firearm certificate and/or shotgun certificate, broken down by age and gender, and breakdowns of firearm and shotgun types.

The statistics in this release were extracted from the National Firearms Licensing Management System (NFLMS) which is a register of all people who have applied for, or have been granted, a certificate to possess or acquire a firearm or shotgun. The system is continually updated as it is a live operational database so these statistics are a snapshot of a point in time.

The statistics presented in sections 3 and 4 are experimental statistics. These statistics should be treated with caution as they are still being developed and have not been subjected to the same level of quality assurance checks as the other figures in this publication. As the Home Office continues to report on these figures in future years, it will aim to develop its quality assurance procedures further, with a view to increasing confidence in the quality of the data and being able to publish them as Official or National Statistics.

The [user guide](#) provides additional information on this release. It includes the coverage of the data, a glossary of terms and information on the conventions used in the statistics, legislation and regulations.

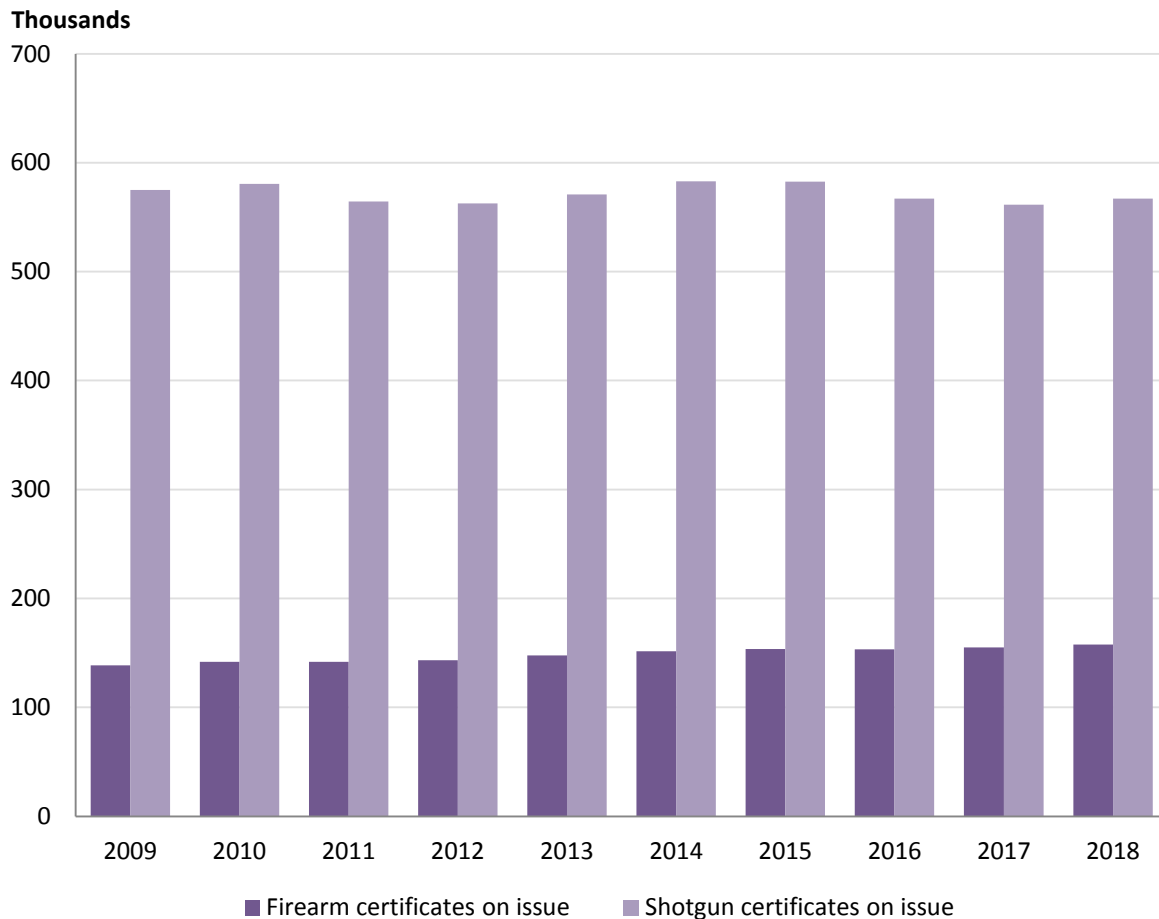
## 2. Firearm and shotgun certificates on issue

There were 157,581 firearm certificates on issue as at 31 March 2018, an increase of 2% (2,623) compared with the previous year (154,958) and the highest number of firearm certificates on issue since comparable records begun following the introduction of the NFLMS (138,728 as at 31 March 2009).

There were 567,047 shotgun certificates on issue as at 31 March 2018, an increase of 1% (5,634) compared with the previous year (561,413) and the first increase in

shotgun certificates since the peak of 582,923 (as at 31 March 2014). As can be seen in Figure 1, compared to the steady rise in the number of firearm certificates on issue, the number of shotgun certificates has fluctuated over the past 10 years (between 561,413 and 582,923).

**Figure 1: Firearm and shotgun certificates on issue as at 31 March 2009 to 2018**



**Chart notes**

Source: [Home Office, Firearm and shotgun certificates in England and Wales, financial year ending 31 March 2018](#), (Table 1 and Table 3).

These figures do not include certificates recorded as coterminous on the NFLMS. Please see the [user guide](#) for more information.

### 3. Weapons covered by firearm and shotgun certificates

There were 577,547 firearms (covered by firearm certificates) as at 31 March 2018 representing an increase of 3% (18,245) compared with the previous year. The average number of firearms per certificate as at 31 March 2018 was 3.7, an increase of 0.1 compared with the previous year. Firearms can be categorised as rifles, handguns, muzzle-loading handguns, Section 1 shotguns, and other firearm types.

There were 1,359,368 shotguns (covered by shotgun certificates) as at 31 March 2018 representing an increase of 0.8% (10,269) compared with the previous year. The average number of shotguns per certificate as at 31 March was 2.4 which has remained the same as the previous year. Shotguns can be categorised as Section 2 shotguns and other shotgun types.

The proportion of each weapon covered by firearm and shotgun certificates has remained stable since 2014 when these data were first collected.

### **3.1 Weapon breakdown for firearm certificates**

Of the 577,547 firearms (covered by firearm certificates) as at 31 March 2018, the majority (58%; 335,162) were rifles, followed by sound moderators at 30% (175,687).

Data on the number of sound moderators are collected to add greater context to the statistics and to highlight that not all weapons classified as firearms discharge ammunition.

### **3.2 Weapons breakdown for shotgun certificates**

Of the 1,359,368 shotguns (covered by shotgun certificates) as at 31 March 2018, Section 2 shotguns accounted for most of the weapons (over 99% at 1,354,477). Other shotgun types accounted for 0.3% (3,959) and shotguns for which no type was recorded on the NFLMS accounted for the remaining 0.1% (932).

## **4. Certificate holders**

### **4.1 People who held a firearm and/or shotgun certificate**

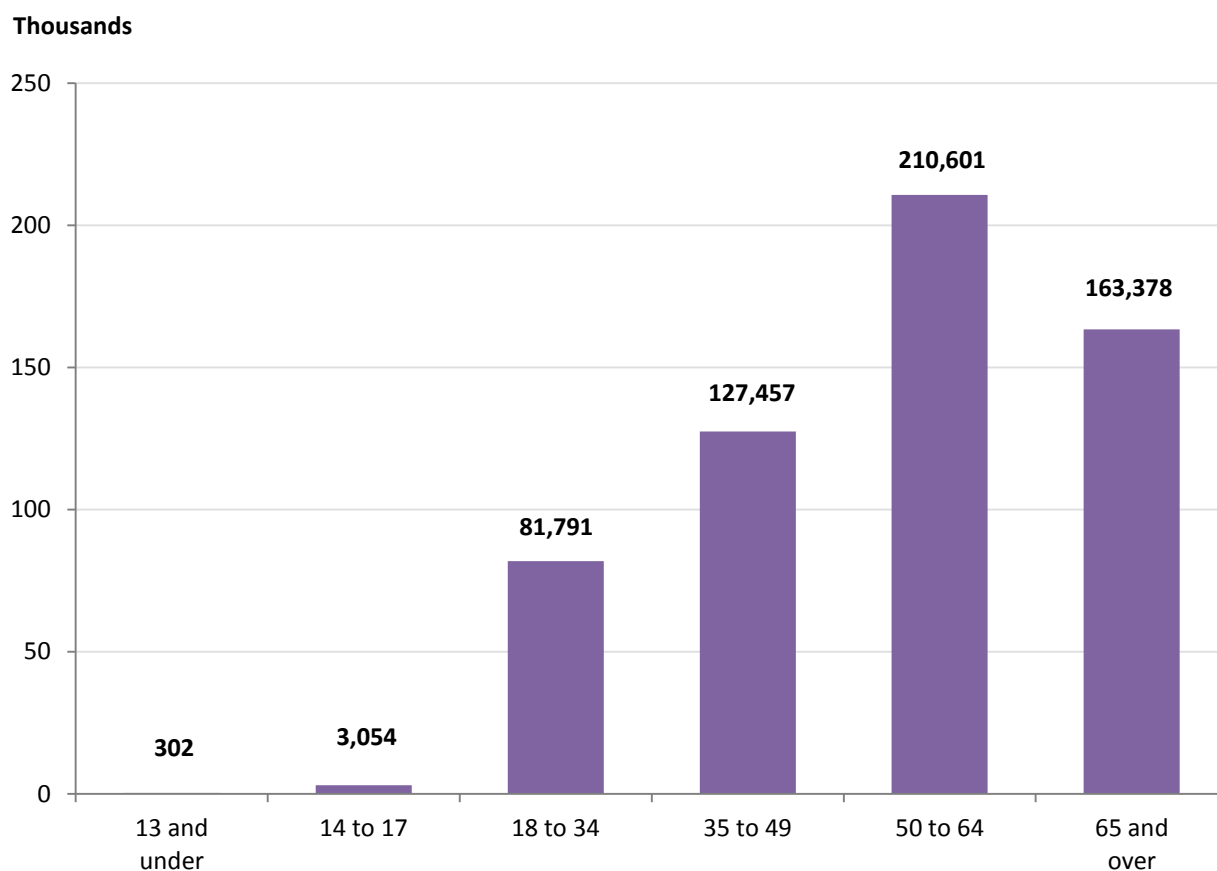
As at 31 March 2018, 586,583 people held a firearm and/or shotgun certificate, an increase of 1% (5,925) compared with the previous year.

Of those people who held a firearm and/or shotgun certificate:

- 94% (551,216) were male
- 0.6% (3,356) were aged 17 years and under
- 72% (419,849) were aged 18 to 64
- 28% (163,378) were aged 65 years and over

Figure 2 shows that most firearm and/or shotgun certificate holders were aged 50 to 64 (210,601).

**Figure 2: Firearm and/or shotgun certificate holders as at 31 March 2018, by age, England and Wales**



**Chart notes**

Source: [Home Office, Firearm and shotgun certificates in England and Wales, financial year ending 31 March 2018](#), (Table E2).

People aged 13 and under cannot lawfully hold a firearm certificate therefore those in the 13 and under category are all shotgun certificate holders.

**4.2 People who held a firearm certificate**

As at 31 March 2018, 157,482 people held a firearm certificate, an increase of 2% (2,715) compared with the previous year.

Of those people who held a firearm certificate:

- 97% (152,031) were male
- 0.2% (367) were aged 14 to 17 years
- 74% (117,283) were aged 18 to 64 years

- 25% (39,832) were aged 65 years and over

People aged 13 and under cannot lawfully hold a firearm certificate.

### **4.3 People who held a shotgun certificate**

As at 31 March 2018, 566,737 people held a shotgun certificate, an increase of 1% (6,888) compared with the previous year.

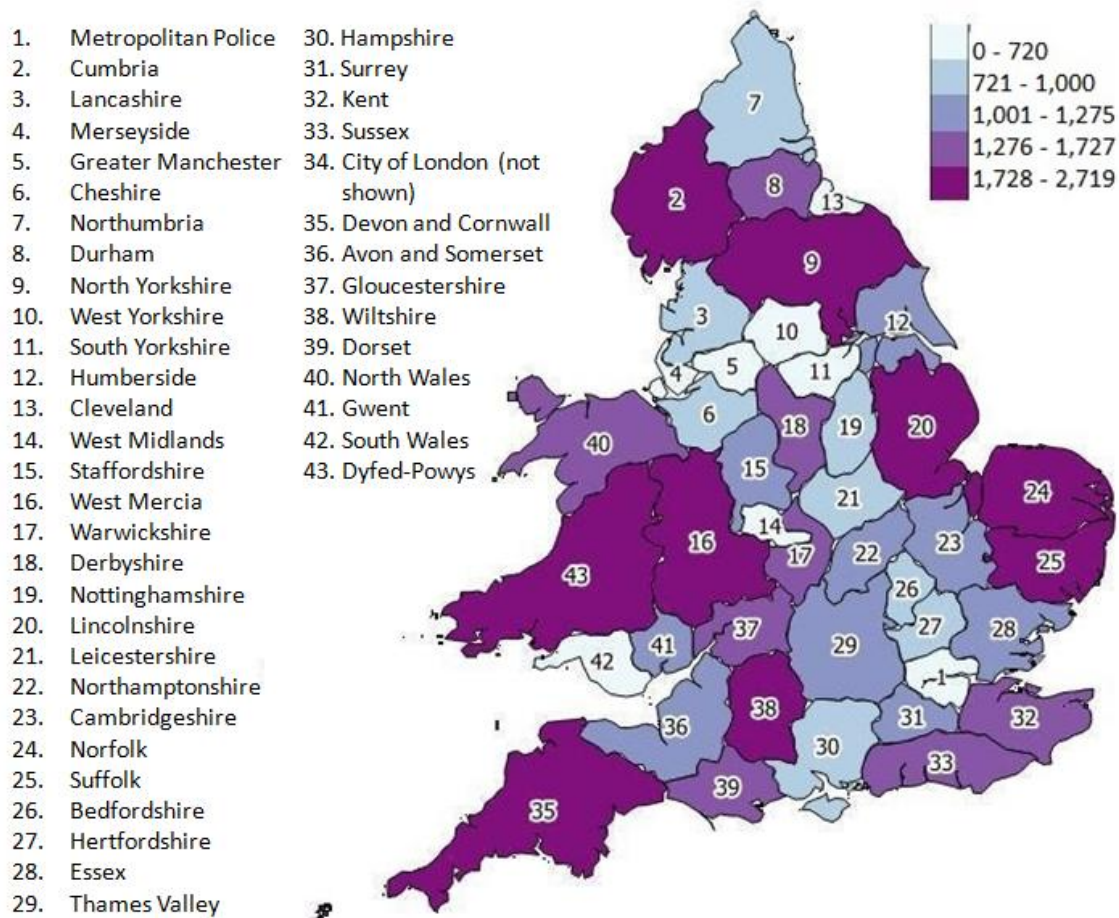
Of those people who held a shotgun certificate:

- 94% (533,275) were male
- 0.1% (302) were aged 13 and under
- 0.5% (3,001) were aged 14 to 17 years
- 72% (406,891) were aged 18 to 64 years
- 28% (156,543) were aged 65 years and over

### **4.4 Firearms and Shotgun certificate holders by police force area**

As shown in figure 3, the areas with the highest number of firearms per 100,000 people as at 31 March 2018 are mainly rural areas, with the highest in North Yorkshire (2,719), Dyfed-Powys (2,545) and Cumbria (2,451). These areas consistently remain the police force areas with the highest number of firearms and/or shotguns per 100,000 people. The population in these areas are often lower and firearms and/or shotguns are more frequently used for employment purposes (for example game keeping and farming) and leisure activities (for example target shooting and game shooting).

**Figure 3: Firearms per 100,000 people by police force area as at 31 March 2018, England and Wales**



**Chart notes**

Source: [Home Office, Firearm and shotgun certificates in England and Wales, financial year ending 31 March 2018](#), (Table 2).

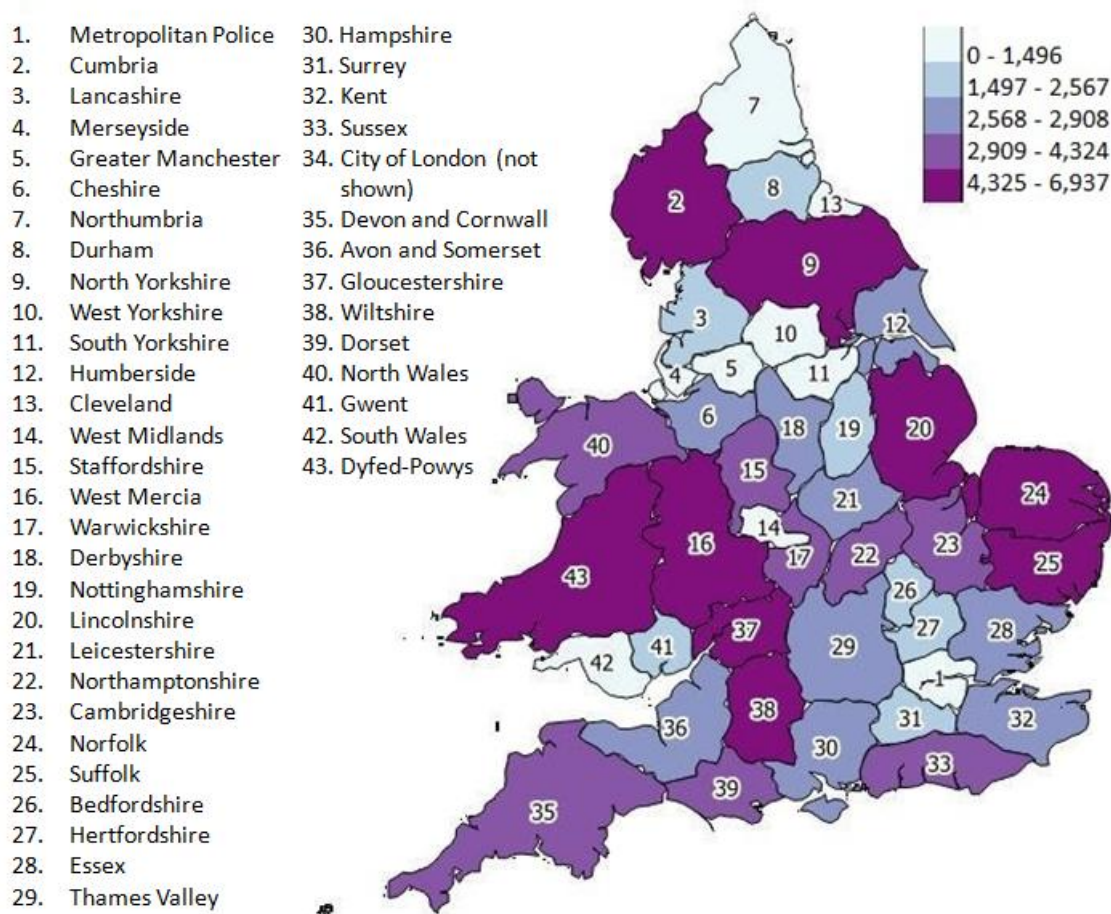
Source for population figures used to produce figures for firearms per 100,000 people by police force area: [Office for National Statistics](#).

Shape file source: [ONS Geo-portal](#)

City of London is not included as its mid-2016 population estimate is less than 100,000.

Similar geographical patterns are seen in the number of shotguns per 100,000 people as at 31 March 2018 (Figure 4) with the highest numbers in Dyfed-Powys (6,937), Norfolk (6,533) and Suffolk (5,839) which are also rural areas.

**Figure 4: Shotguns per 100,000 people by police force area as at 31 March 2018, England and Wales**



**Chart notes**

Source: [Home Office, Firearm and shotgun certificates in England and Wales, financial year ending 31 March 2018](#), (Table 4).

Source for population figures used to produce figures for shotguns per 100,000 people by police force area: [Office for National Statistics](#).

Shape file source: [ONS Geo-portal](#).

City of London is not included as its mid-2016 population estimate is less than 100,000.

Police forces with the lowest number of shotguns per 100,000 people tend to be in large metropolitan cities in England, as the lowest are in Merseyside (561), the Metropolitan Police Service (564) and Greater Manchester (638). This also relates to the Police forces with the lowest number of firearms per 100,000 people as the lowest numbers are in the Metropolitan Police Service (209), West Midlands (312) and Merseyside (344).



## 5. New applications, renewals and revocations

In the year ending 31 March 2018, there were:

- 9,696 new applications for firearm certificates
  - of which 2% (217) were refused, the same proportion of applications refused in the previous year.
  - the number of new firearm certificates granted (9,479) has decreased by 1% compared with the previous year.
- 24,584 new applications for shotgun certificates
  - of which 3% (710) were refused, similar to the 2% of applications refused in the previous year.
  - the number of new shotgun certificates granted (23,874) has increased by 3% compared with the previous year.
- 28,581 firearm certificate renewal applications, of which almost all (28,504), were granted and just 0.3% (77) were refused.
- 88,647 shotgun certificate renewal applications, of which almost all (88,484), were granted and just 0.2% (163) were refused.
- 345 firearm certificates were revoked, a decrease of 4% (-13) from 358 in the previous year.
- 1,082 shotgun certificates were revoked, a decrease of 11% (-134) from 1,216 in the previous year.

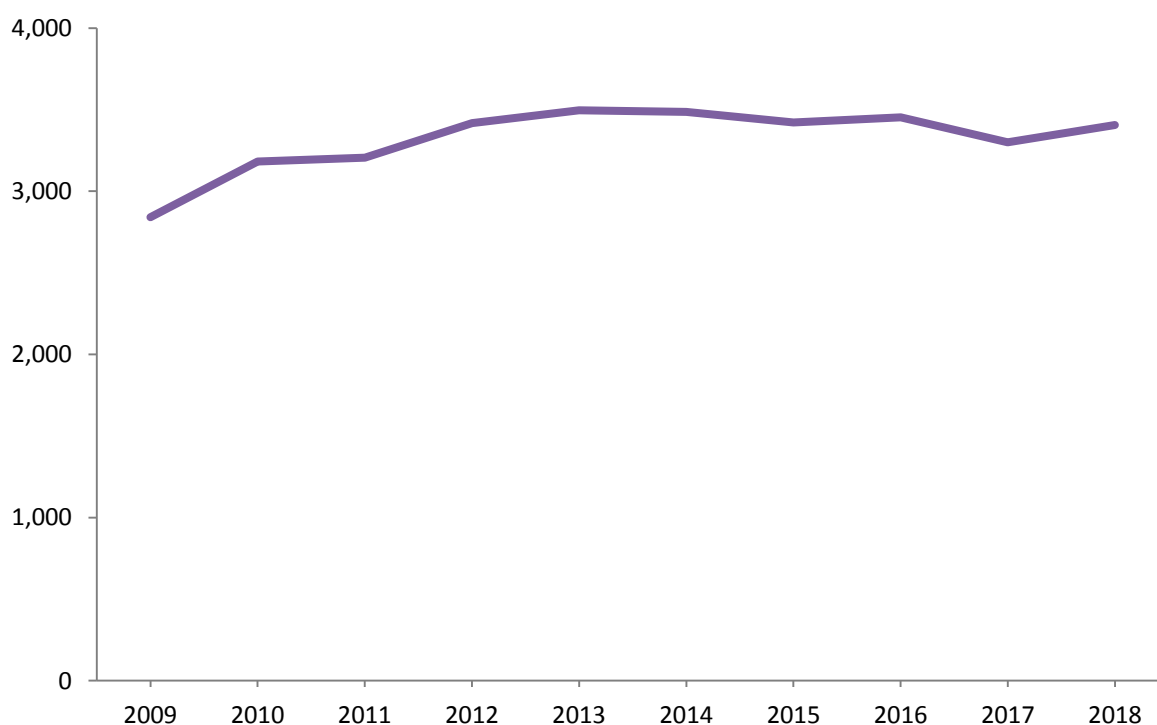
Firearm and shotgun certificates can be revoked if, for example, the chief police officer for the force concerned is satisfied that the holder can no longer be entrusted with firearms in accordance with the [Firearms Act 1968](#).

## 6. Registered Firearm Dealers

There were 3,406 registered firearm dealers in England and Wales as at 31 March 2018. This represents an increase of 3% (107) compared with the previous year.

Figure 5 shows that following the increase in registered firearms dealers which peaked as at 31 March 2013, the number of registered firearms dealers has remained relatively stable.

**Figure 5: Registered firearm dealers as at 31 March 2009 to 2018, England and Wales**



**Chart notes**

Source: [Home Office, Firearm and shotgun certificates in England and Wales, financial year ending 31 March 2018](#), (Table 6).

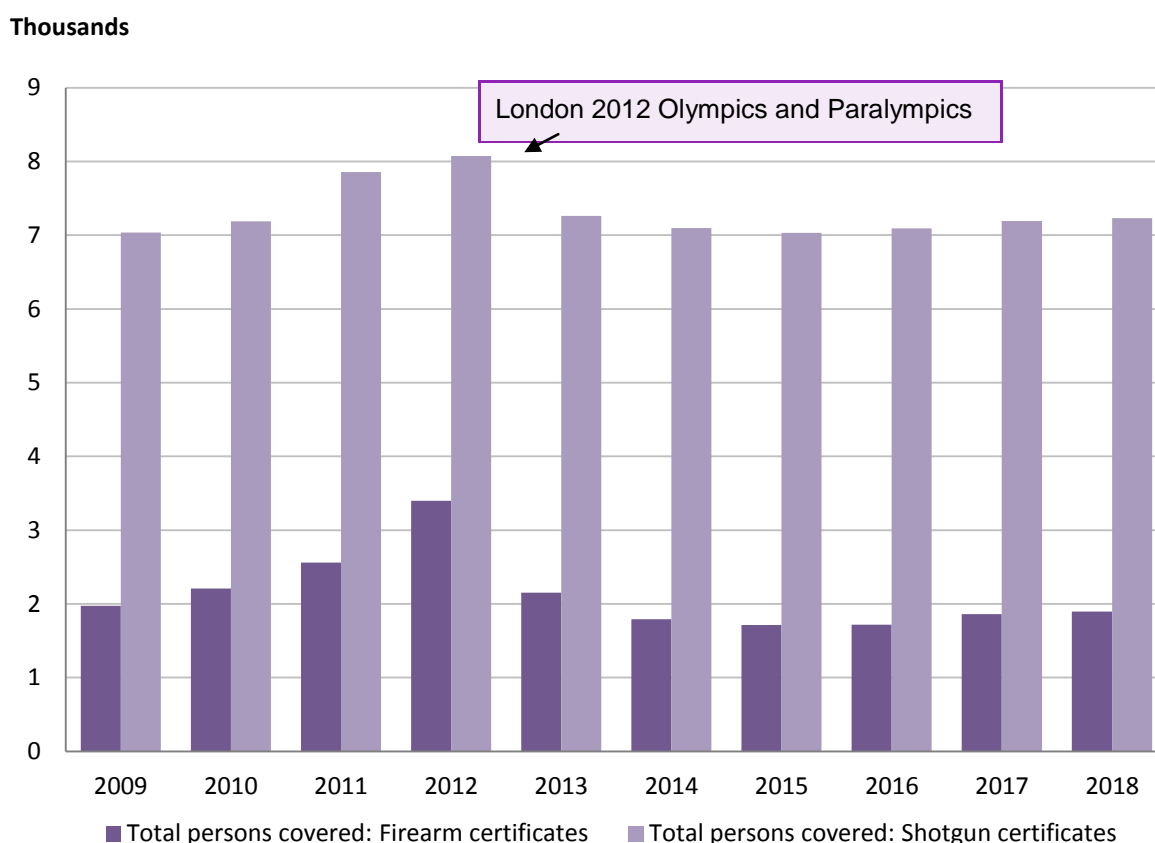
## 7. Visitors' permits

Visitors' permits allow visitors to Great Britain to possess a firearm, shotgun or ammunition without holding a firearm or shotgun certificate. Visitors' permits are usually granted enabling the holder to attend organised shoots such as deer stalking or competitive target shooting events. European Union (EU) residents visiting Great Britain must also be in possession of a valid European firearms pass (EFP).

In the year ending 31 March 2018, 1,896 people were covered by individual or group visitors' permits for firearms representing an increase of 2% (36) compared with the previous year. There were 7,231 people covered by individual or group visitors' permits for shotguns representing an increase of 0.5% (38) compared with the previous year.

Following the peak in 2012 (11,474 total persons covered), the number of people covered by individual or group visitors' permits for firearms and shotguns has remained relatively stable and at similar levels from 2014 to 2018. As shown in Figure 6, the peak in visitor's permits in 2012 coincided with the London Olympics and Paralympics.

**Figure 6: Visitors' permits, years ending 31 March 2009 to 2018, England and Wales**



**Chart notes**

Source: [Home Office, Firearm and shotgun certificates in England and Wales, financial year ending 31 March 2018](#), (Table 8).

## 8. European Firearms Passes and Article 7 Authorities

The EFP is a firearms passport for EU residents intending to take their firearm or shotgun to another EU member state.

As at 31 March 2018, 15,643 EFPs were on issue in England and Wales, representing a 0.8% increase of 124 compared with the previous year.

Article 7 of the Weapons Directive requires any EU resident wanting to purchase certain types of firearms, or ammunition for such firearms, outside their state of residence to have the prior authority of their own state. There were 6 applications by firearm and shotgun certificate holders for Article 7 Authorities in the year ending 31 March 2018, compared with none in the previous year and 8 in the year ending 31 March 2016.

Statistical Bulletins are prepared by staff in Home Office Analysis and Insight under the National Statistics Code of Practice and can be downloaded from GOV.UK:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/home-office/about/statistics>

ISBN: 978-1-78655-683-7

ISSN: 1759-7005



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