



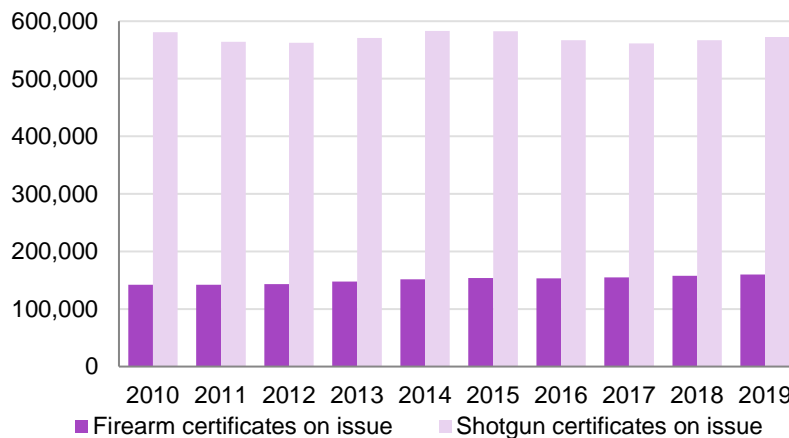
Statistics on firearm and shotgun certificates, England and Wales: April 2018 to March 2019

This release presents statistics on firearm and shotgun certificates issued by police forces in England and Wales under the Firearms Act 1968 (as amended).

As at 31 March 2019, there were:

- **159,745 firearm certificates on issue**, continuing the steady year-on-year increase seen over the past 9 years.
- **572,488 shotgun certificates on issue** – there has been little variation in numbers over the last 10 years.

Firearm and shotgun certificates on issue as at 31 March 2010 to 2019



- **591,302 people held a firearm and/or a shotgun certificate**, an 0.8% increase of 4,719 since last year.

In the year ending 31 March 2019, there were:

- **8,663 new applications for firearm certificates**, of which 98% were granted and 2% were refused.
- **21,637 new applications for shotgun certificates**, of which 97% were granted and 3% were refused.
- **376 firearms certificates were revoked – increase of 9%** (31) compared with the previous year.
- **1,116 shotgun certificates were revoked – increase of 3%** (34) compared with the previous year.

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1 Introduction

A firearm or shotgun certificate is a type of licence, issued by the police, which 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 2019, as well as historical trend data and police force comparisons. The release also provides information on certificates granted or refused for new and renewal applications, certificates revoked, registered firearms dealers, visitors' permits, European Firearms Passes (EFP) and Article 7 Authorities issued. It also includes official statistics on the number of people that hold a firearm 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). The system is continually updated as it is a live operational database, so these statistics are a snapshot of a point in time.

NFLMS:

This system is a register of all people who have applied for, or have been granted, a certificate to possess or acquire a firearm or shotgun and includes registered firearms dealers.

Firearm and shotgun licensing

All persons acquiring, or in possession of, a firearm or shotgun must hold a certificate issued by the chief officer of the police force area in which they reside unless they are otherwise exempt.

To obtain a firearm or shotgun certificate, the chief officer must be satisfied that: (i) the applicant has good reason for having the firearm; (ii) the applicant is fit to be entrusted with a firearm; and (iii) the public safety or peace will not be endangered.

Types of firearms:

Firearms are categorised as rifles, handguns, muzzle-loading handguns, Section 1 shotguns, and other firearm types.

Types of shotguns:

Shotguns are categorised as Section 2 shotguns and other shotgun types.

Section 1 shotguns in general are weapons that contain a magazine holding more than two rounds. Section 1 shotguns are held on firearm certificates.

Section 2 shotguns in general are weapons that may have a magazine restricted to no more than two rounds.

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

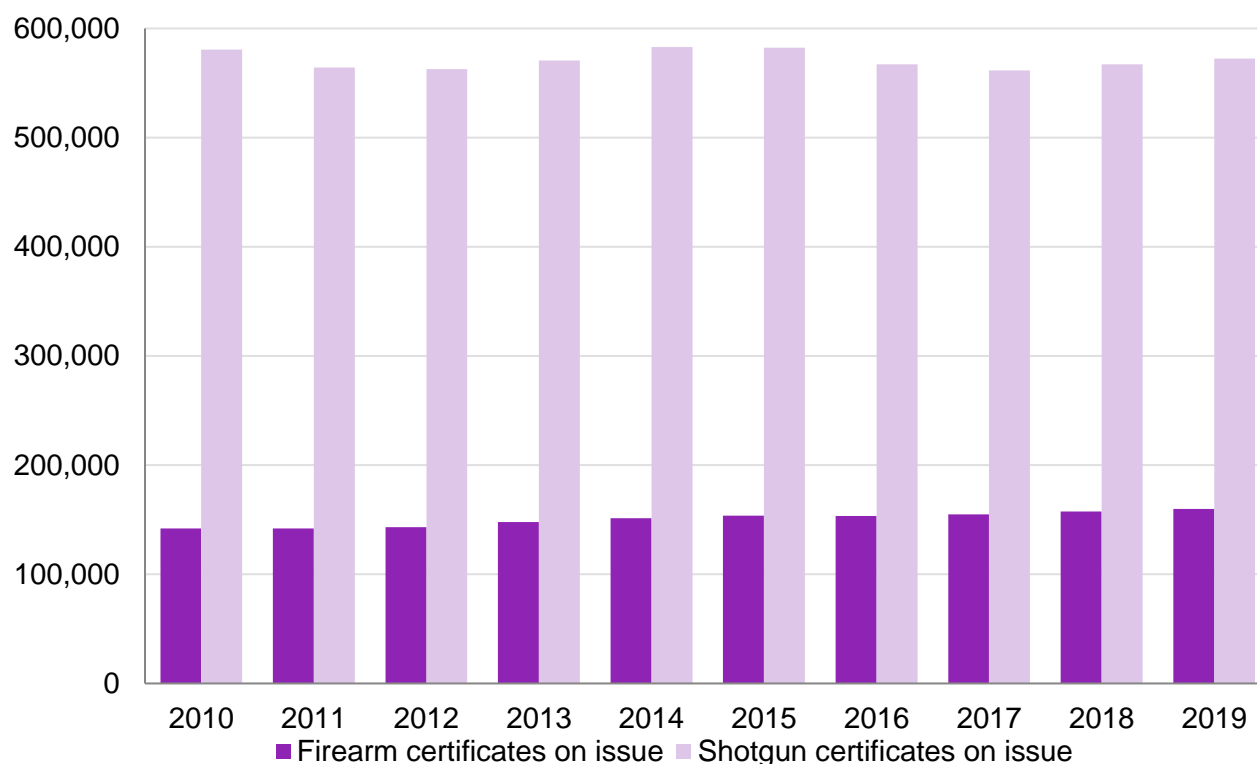
The accompanying data tables for this statistical release can be found [here](#) on GOV.UK.

2 Firearm and shotgun certificates on issue

There were 159,745 firearm certificates on issue as at 31 March 2019, a 1% increase of 2,164 compared with the previous year (157,581) and the highest number of firearm certificates on issue since comparable records began following the introduction of the NFLMS (138,728 as at 31 March 2009).

There were 572,488 shotgun certificates on issue as at 31 March 2019, a 1% increase of 5,441 compared with the previous year (567,047). As shown in Figure 1, compared to the small but steady rise in the number of firearm certificates on issue, the number of shotgun certificates has shown small fluctuations over the past 10 years (between 561,413 and 582,923).

Figure 1: Firearm and shotgun certificates on issue as at 31 March 2010 to 2019, England and Wales



Source: [Home Office, Statistics on Firearm and Shotgun certificates data tables, Tables 1 and 3.](#)

Data on firearm and shotgun certificates on issue by police force area are in [Table 1](#) and [Table 3](#).

3 Weapons covered by firearm and shotgun certificates

As at 31 March 2019, an average of 3.7 firearms were held on a firearms certificate, which has remained the same as the previous year. The average number of firearms held on a certificate has shown little change over the past 10 years.

As at 31 March 2019, an average of 2.4 shotguns were held on a shotgun certificate. This has remained the same for the past 10 years.

Types of weapon held on firearm certificates

Of the 596,661 firearms (covered by firearm certificates), the majority (58%) were rifles, followed by 'other' (33%). Almost all (93%) of the 184,408 'other' weapon types were sound moderators.

Rifles are typically used for target shooting or for the control of vermin.

Sound moderators are an accessory subject to certificate control as "items designed to reduce the noise or flash of a firearm".

Types of weapon held on shotgun certificates

Of the 1,375,556 shotguns (covered by shotgun certificates), almost all (99%) were Section 2 shotguns. Other shotgun types and shotguns for which no type had been recorded on the NFLMS both accounted for less than 1% (0.01% and 0.07%, respectively).

A Section 2 shotgun may have a magazine restricted to no more than two rounds and is held on a shotgun certificate. The main usage of these types of weapons is vermin shooting, clay pigeon shooting and sporting purposes.

The [user guide](#) provides further definitions for the other firearm and shotgun types held on certificates.

Data on weapons held on firearm and shotgun certificates by police force area are in [Table 2](#), [Table 4](#) and [Table 15](#).

4 Certificate holders

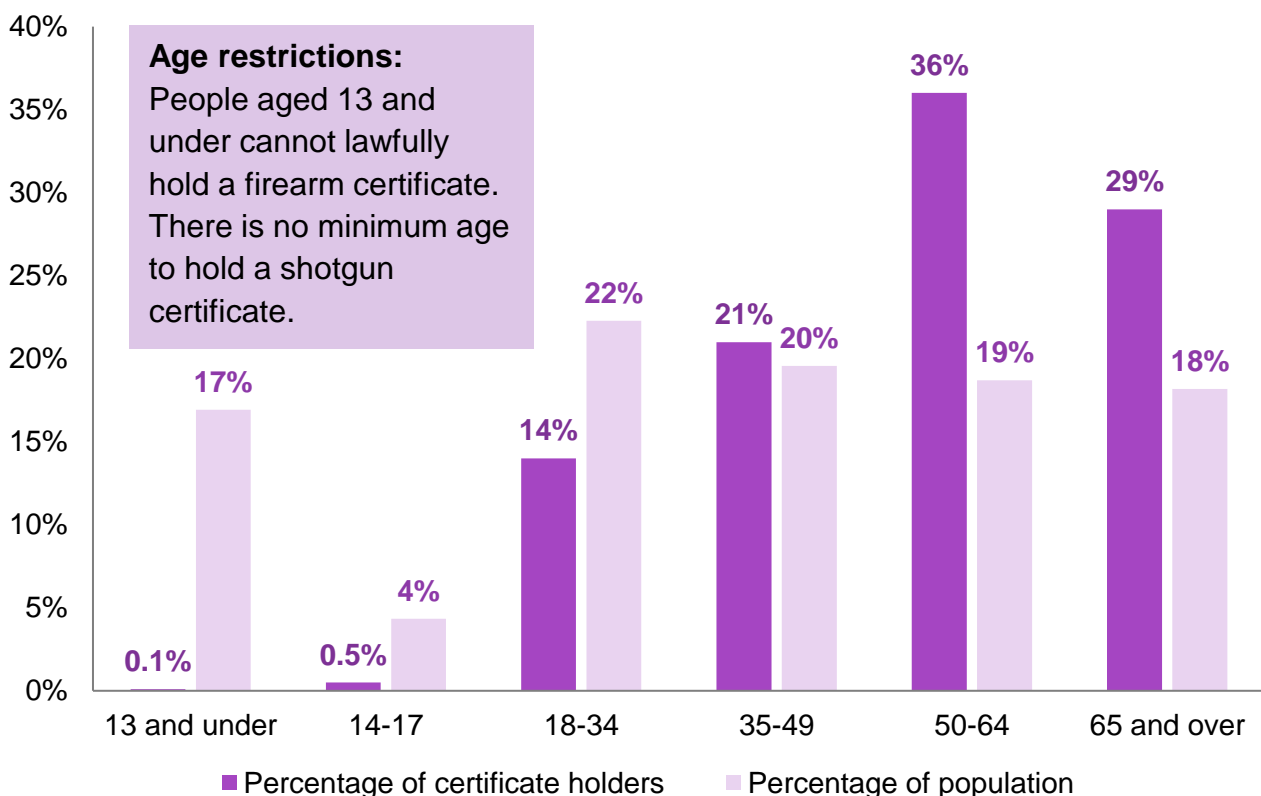
As at 31 March 2019, 591,302 people held a firearm and/or shotgun certificate, an increase of 1% (4,719) compared with the previous year. Within this total figure are those that only hold a firearm certificate, those that only hold a shotgun certificate and those that hold both types of certificate. A person is only counted once if they hold both firearm and shotgun certificates.

Of the 591,302 certificate holders:

- 94% (555,680) were male
- 70% (416,671) were aged 18 to 64
- 0.5% (3,092) were aged 17 years and under
- The youngest shotgun certificate holder as at 31 March 2019 was aged 8.

For young people under age 14, certain exemptions apply under the Firearms Acts which allow them to possess a firearm or shotgun in certain circumstances. For example, for sporting purposes, for use at a rifle/pistol club or cadet corps, or at a miniature rifle range. Appendix 4 in the Home Office [Guide on Firearms licensing law](#) provides further detail on the laws and exemptions for young people holding certificates.

Figure 2: Firearm and/or shotgun certificate holders as at 31 March 2019 by age group, and proportion of age group in population in England and Wales



Source: [Home Office, Statistics on Firearm and Shotgun certificates data tables, Table 14](#)

Figure 2 shows that, 50 to 64-year olds are more likely to hold a firearm and/or shotgun certificate than those in younger age groups. Over a third (36%; 212,315) of firearm and/or shotgun certificate holders were aged 50 to 64. However, this age group accounts for only 19% of the total population of England and Wales.

There has been little variation in the number of people that hold a firearm or a shotgun certificate since comparable figures have been available.

- As at 31 March 2019, 159,617 people held a **firearm** certificate, a 1% increase of 2,135 compared with the previous year.
- As at 31 March 2019, 572,085 people held a **shotgun** certificate, a 1% increase of 5,348 compared with the previous year.

The characteristics of those that hold a firearm and those that hold a shotgun are very similar, as displayed below in Table 1.

Table 1: People who held a firearm and/or shotgun certificate as at 31 March 2019, by age and gender, in England and Wales

	People who held a firearm certificate	People who held a shotgun certificate
Male	97% (154,133)	94% (538,313)
13 and under	N/A	0.1% (303)
14 to 17 years	0.2% (310)	0.5% (2,743)
18 to 64 years	74% (117,391)	71% (404,460)
65 years and over	26% (41,916)	29% (164,579)

Source: [Home Office, Statistics on Firearm and Shotgun certificates data tables, Table 13.](#)

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

Firearm and shotguns held on certificates by police force area

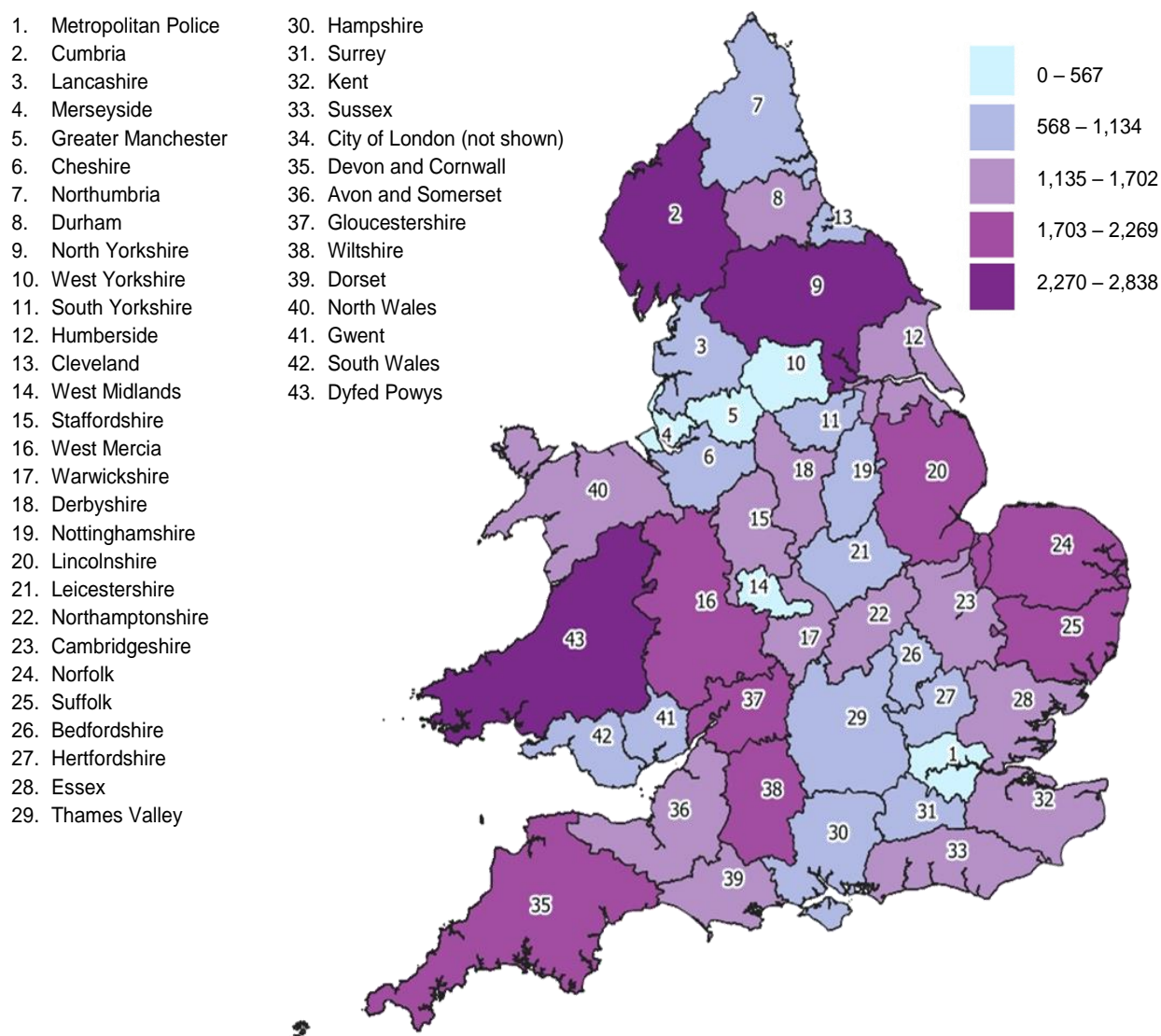
As shown in Figure 3, the areas with the highest number of firearms (held on certificates) per 100,000 people are the rural areas of North Yorkshire (2,837), Dyfed-Powys (2,637) and Cumbria (2,512).

These areas are consistently the police force areas with the highest number of firearms and/or shotguns per 100,000 people. The population in rural areas are often lower than police force areas that cover cities, and firearms and/or shotguns owned here are likely to be used for employment purposes (for example game keeping and farming) and leisure activities (for example target shooting and game shooting).

Areas with the lowest number of firearms (held on certificates) per 100,000 people tend to be in large metropolitan areas in England, as the lowest are in the Metropolitan Police (212), West Midlands (315) and Merseyside (340).

The police force areas correspond to the certificate holder's primary address. Therefore, it should be noted that the weapon may be stored and used in another police force area.

Figure 3: Firearms per 100,000 people by police force area as at 31 March 2019, England and Wales



Source: [Home Office, Statistics on Firearm and Shotgun certificates data tables, Table 2](#)

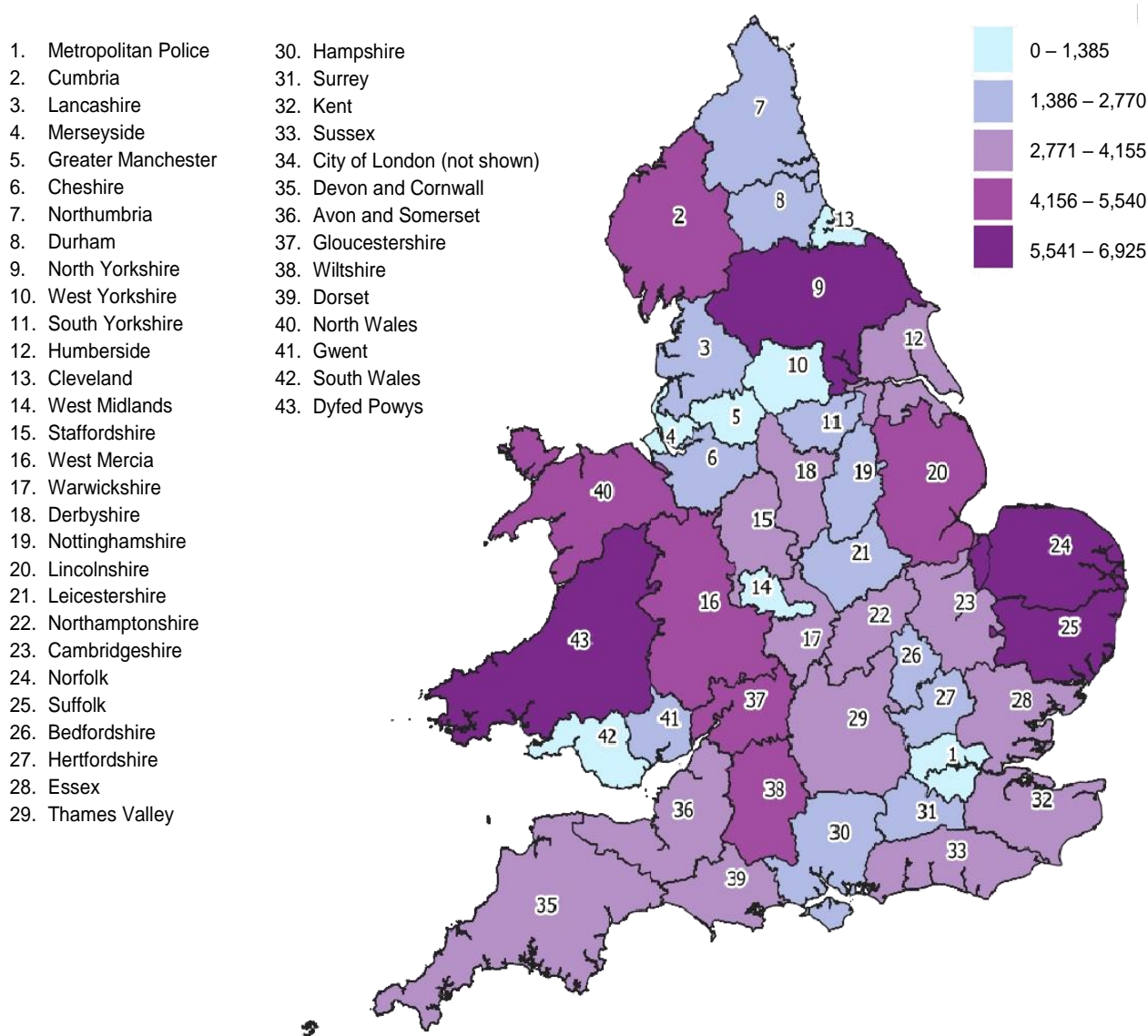
Source for population figures used to produce figures per 100,000 people by police force area: [Office for National Statistics](#). Shape file source: [ONS Geo-portal](#)

Notes: City of London is not included as its mid-2017 population estimate is less than 100,000.

Similar to the geographical patterns seen in Figure 3, the areas with the highest number of shotguns (held on certificates) per 100,000 people as at 31 March 2019 (Figure 4) are also rural areas, with the highest numbers in Dyfed-Powys (6,925), Norfolk (6,556) and Suffolk (5,805).

This is also true for the police force areas with the lowest number of shotguns (held on certificates) per 100,000 people, as the lowest numbers are in Merseyside (557), the Metropolitan Police (570) and Greater Manchester (633).

Figure 4: Shotguns per 100,000 people by police force area as at 31 March 2019, England and Wales



Source: [Home Office, Statistics on Firearm and Shotgun certificates data tables, Table 4](#)

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

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

Notes: City of London is not included as its mid-2017 population estimate is less than 100,000

Data on certificate holders by police force area can be found in [Table 13 and Table 14](#).

5 New applications, renewals and revocations

In the year ending 31 March 2019, there were:

- 8,663 **new applications for firearm certificates**, of which only 2% (196) were refused; the same proportion as in the previous year.
- 21,637 **new applications for shotgun certificates**, of which only 3% (631) were refused; the same proportion as in the previous year.
- 17,320 **firearm certificate renewal applications**, of which almost all (17,283), were granted and just 0.2% (37) were refused.
- 45,255 **shotgun certificate renewal applications**, of which almost all (45,141), were granted and just 0.3% (114) were refused.
- 376 **firearm certificates** were **revoked**, a 9% increase of 31 from 345 in the previous year.
- 1,116 **shotgun certificates** were **revoked**, a 3% increase of 34 from 1082 in the previous year.

Refusals:

An application may be refused if the chief officer of police is not satisfied that the applicant can fulfil the criteria for the grant or renewal of a certificate. Any reason to refuse an application must be clearly justified and explained.

Firearm and shotgun certificates can be revoked by the chief officer of police for the force concerned if they have reason to believe that the holder:

- can no longer be entrusted with firearms in accordance with the [Firearms Act 1968](#)
- is of unsound mind or is otherwise unfit to be entrusted with a firearm and/or shotgun
- can no longer be permitted to have the firearm and/or shotgun or ammunition to which the certificate relates in his possession without danger to the public safety or to the peace
- no longer has a good reason for having in his possession, or for purchasing or acquiring, the firearm or ammunition which he is authorised

Data on new applications, renewals and revocations by police force area are in [Table 2 and Table 4](#).

6 Additional statistics

Registered firearm dealers

There were 3,408 registered firearm dealers in England and Wales as at 31 March 2019, remaining relatively stable compared with 3,406 in the previous year.

A firearms dealer wishing to carry on business, including exhibiting at game fairs, arms fairs and other temporary events, in their own or another police force area, must be registered by the chief officer of police as a firearms dealer for that police force area. Therefore, within the total figure of registered firearms dealers, the same dealer may appear more than once if registered in more than one police force area.

Data on registered firearm dealers by police force area are in [Table 6 and Table 7](#).

Visitor's permits

In the year ending 31 March 2019, 2,016 people were covered by individual or group visitors' permits for firearms, representing a 6% increase of 120 compared with the previous year. In the same period, there were 7,177 people covered by individual or group visitors' permits for shotguns representing a 0.7% decrease of 54 compared with the previous year.

Data on visitors' permits by police force area are in [Table 8, Table 9 and Table 10](#).

European Firearms Pass (EFP)

The EFP is a form of passport for firearms held by EU residents intending to take their certificated firearms or shotguns to another EU member state. A person must be in possession of a valid firearms and/or shotgun certificate to acquire an EFP.

As at 31 March 2019, 16,114 EFPs were on issue in England and Wales, representing a 3% increase of 471 compared with the previous year.

Data on EFPs by police force area are in [Table 11](#).

Article 7 Authorities

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 must obtain prior authority from their own state. There were 5 applications by firearm and shotgun certificate holders for Article 7 Authorities in the year ending 31 March 2019, compared with 6 in 2018 and none in the year ending 31 March 2017.

Data on Article 7 Authorities by police force area are in [Table 12](#).

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