

23 August 2018

Our Reference: IR-01-18-5853

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]

I am writing to you in response to your request dated 17 July 2018. Your request was made pursuant to the Official Information Act 1982 and specifically requested:

- *How many registered firearms are there in New Zealand? Please include yearly figures from 2008.*
- *Do Police carry estimates of how many illegal firearms there are in New Zealand? If so, please provide yearly estimates from 2008.*

The Arms Act 1983 does not require firearms licence holders to register firearms that they possess. However, a specific endorsement is required for each military style semi-automatic, pistol, and restricted weapon. Provided below are the numbers of MSSAs, pistols, and restricted weapons linked to firearms licence holders by year when the firearm was first linked. This is independent of the current ownership status of the firearm or the current status of the person's licence. When a firearm changed hands in later years, only the first year is shown.

First ownership year	MSSAs, pistols, or restricted firearms linked to firearms licence holders
2008	1,535
2009	2,247
2010	1,892
2011	1,420
2012	1,790
2013	1,843
2014	4,867
2015	3,341
2016	2,656
2017	2,839
2018 to 12 Aug	2,115

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Police does not know how many legally or illegally owned firearms there are in New Zealand. As noted above, there is no requirement for licence holders to register their firearms, therefore, there is no record of the majority of firearms possessed in New Zealand. Justice TM Thorp in his 1997 Review of Firearms Control in New Zealand Report of an Independent Inquiry commissioned by the Minister of Police estimated the number of firearms in the civilian armoury in 1996-1997 to be between 700,000 to 1 million. In 2016, using the same methodology, Police estimated a maximum of 1.2 million legal firearms existed in the civilian armoury in 2014.

The number of firearms that are held illegally in the civilian armoury is impossible to estimate. This question is refused in accordance with s18(e) of the Official Information Act 1982, as the requested information does not exist.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this decision.

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

Yours sincerely



Mike McIlraith
Acting Superintendent
Arms Act Service Delivery Group