



BRIEFING PAPER

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Firearm Crime Statistics: England & Wales

By Grahame Allen
Noel Dempsey

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Summary

This briefing paper examines firearm offence statistics produced by the Home Office [Crime in England & Wales](#) bulletin (published by the ONS).

This note does not provide details on firearm possession offences where the weapon was not used. The statistical publications on firearm crime concentrate on those offences where a firearm was used in the execution of another offence.

In reporting the number of firearm offences, it is not always possible to ascertain whether a real firearm was actually used. Unless a weapon is fired or recovered by the police following a criminal offence, there is no way of knowing conclusively whether the firearm was real or an imitation, or whether it was loaded or unloaded at the time of the offence. Moreover, the categorisation of firearms will sometimes be strongly reliant on the descriptions given to the police by victims or witnesses, or upon other evidence. Some offences involve the use of imitation weapons, while others involve the use of a 'supposed firearm' (i.e. a concealed object *presumed* to be a firearm).

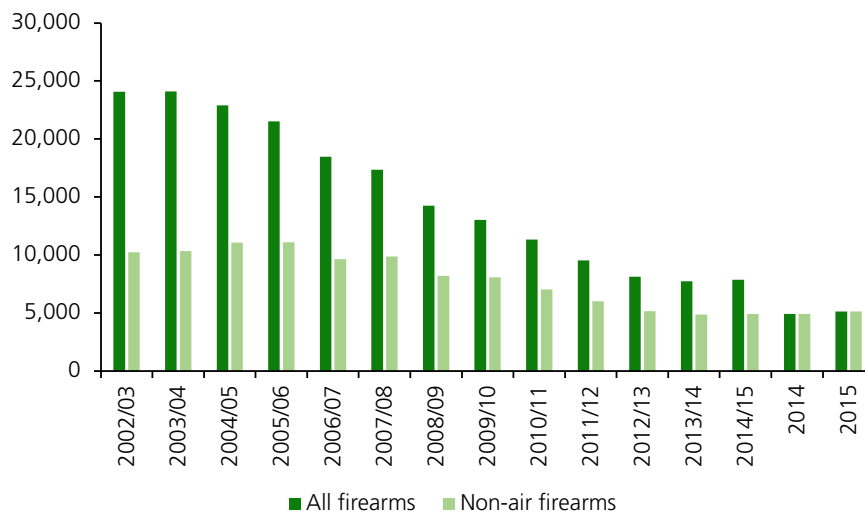
1. England & Wales

Statistics on the number of police recorded firearm offences are published by the ONS in the [Crime in England & Wales](#) bulletin. Additional statistics are published by the ONS in the [Focus on Violent Crime and Sexual Offences](#) compendium.

1.1 Number of offences

For the year ending March 2015 there were a total of 7,866 recorded firearm offences in England & Wales. This was an increase of just under 2% on the number of offences recorded during the year ending March 2014.

Number of police recorded firearm offences, 2002/03-2015¹



Since 2002/03 there has been a general decline in the recorded use of firearms. In 2002/03 there were just over 24,000 firearm offences. By 2014/15 there were just under 7,800 recorded offences – a decrease of just over 16,200 (67%) compared to 2002/03. The number of firearm offences recorded declined by just over 5% per annum between 2002/03 and 2014/15.

In 2002/03 there were just under 10,250 non-air firearm offences in England & Wales and accounted for around 43% of all firearm offences. During the mid-2000s there was a slight increase in the number of non-air firearm offences recorded. Non-air firearm offences were around 8% higher in 2005/06 compared to 2002/03. Since 2005/06 there has been a general decline in non-air firearm offences; in the year ending December 2015 the number of non-air firearm offences had decreased by 54% compared to 2005/06.

The number of non-air firearm offences in the year ending December 2015 was around half the number recorded in 2002/03.

¹ Financial years except for 2014 and 2015 which are calendar years. Includes air and non-air weapons except for 2014 and 2015 which is non-air firearm only.

In 2014/15 the Metropolitan police recorded the largest number of non-air firearm offences accounting for just over 33% of all non-air firearm offences in England & Wales. Compared to 2013/14 the number of non-air weapon offences recorded by the Metropolitan police increased by 3.6%.

West Midlands police had the highest rate of non-air firearm offences in 2014/15 (20 per 100,000 head of population) whilst Hertfordshire had the lowest (1 per 100,000 head of population).

Top ten police forces by non-air firearm offences, 2014/15

	2014/15	2013/14 % change	Offences per 100,000 population
Metropolitan Police	1,652	+3.6%	19
West Midlands	562	+4.1%	20
Greater Manchester	437	+10.1%	16
West Yorkshire	221	-1.3%	10
Essex	176	+14.3%	10
Merseyside	162	-23.6%	12
South Yorkshire	161	-1.8%	12
Devon & Cornwall	122	+5.2%	7
Lancashire	116	0.0%	8
Sussex	90	+32.4%	5

On a regional level (excluding London) the North West had the greatest number of non-air firearm offences during 2014/15. Compared to 2010/11 the North West had a 22% reduction in the number of recorded offences.

On a per capita basis London had the highest number of non-air firearm offences per 100,000 head of population in 2014/15. The West Midlands and the North West had the second and third highest rate of non-air firearm offence.

Non-air firearm offences per 100,000 head of population by region, 2014/15²



Non-air firearm offences per 100,000 population, 2014/15

West Midlands	20
Metropolitan Police	19
Greater Manchester	16
Bedfordshire	13
South Yorkshire	12
Merseyside	12
Essex	10
West Yorkshire	10
England & Wales	9
Suffolk	8
Lancashire	8
Devon & Cornwall	7
Cumbria	7
Derbyshire	6
Nottinghamshire	6
Leicestershire	6
Sussex	5
Cheshire	5
Cambridgeshire	5
Northamptonshire	5
Avon & Somerset	5
South Wales	5
Gloucestershire	4
Hampshire	4
Warwickshire	4
Northumbria	4
West Mercia	4
Humberside	4
Wiltshire	3
Staffordshire	3
Surrey	3
Dyfed-Powys	3
Dorset	3
Cleveland	2
Durham	2
Lincolnshire	2
North Wales	2
Kent	2
Gwent	2
Thames Valley	2
Norfolk	2
North Yorkshire	1
Hertfordshire	1

² See source of appended Table 2.

1.2 Type of offence

In the year ending March 2015 criminal damage offences accounted for just under 32% of all firearm offences (air and non-air firearms).

Violence against the person (VATP) and Robbery offences accounted for 24% and just under 22% respectively for all firearm offences.

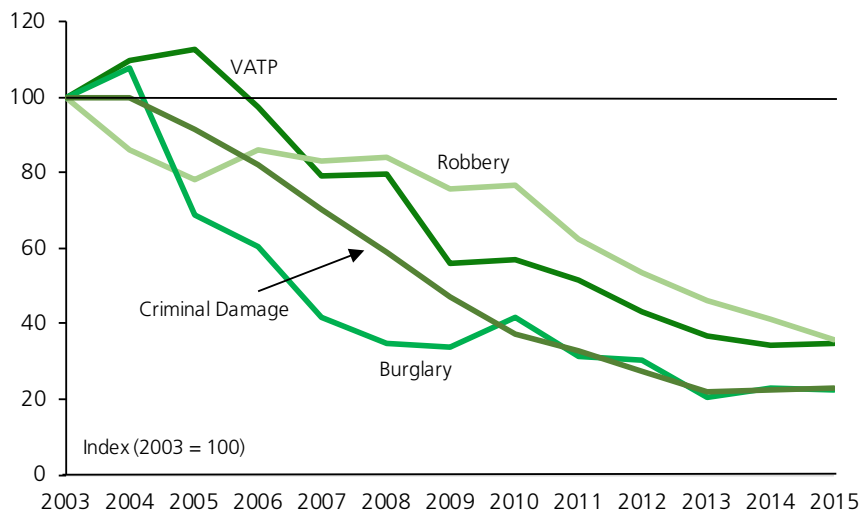
There is a notable difference when comparing non-air firearm offences and air firearm offences.

Offences by firearm type, 2014/15

	Offences by firearm		Offences % by firearm	
	Non-air	Air	Non-air	Air
VATP	1,540	368	31.4%	12.5%
Robbery	1,691	25	34.4%	0.8%
Burglary	108	4	2.2%	0.1%
Criminal damage	320	2,193	6.5%	74.2%
Public fear, alarm or distress	317	17	6.5%	0.6%
Possession of weapons	674	111	13.7%	3.8%
Other firearm offences	262	236	5.3%	8.0%
Total	4,912	2,954	100%	100%

In 2014/15 VATP and robbery offences each accounted for around a third of all firearm offences. By contrast, air firearms accounted for just over 12% and just under 1% for the same offence categories. Criminal damage offences are more likely to occur with an air based firearm than a non-air firearm – in 2014/15 just over 74% of criminal damage offences accounted for all air firearm offences and just 6.5% for non-air firearms.

Index of selected offences for all firearms, year ending March

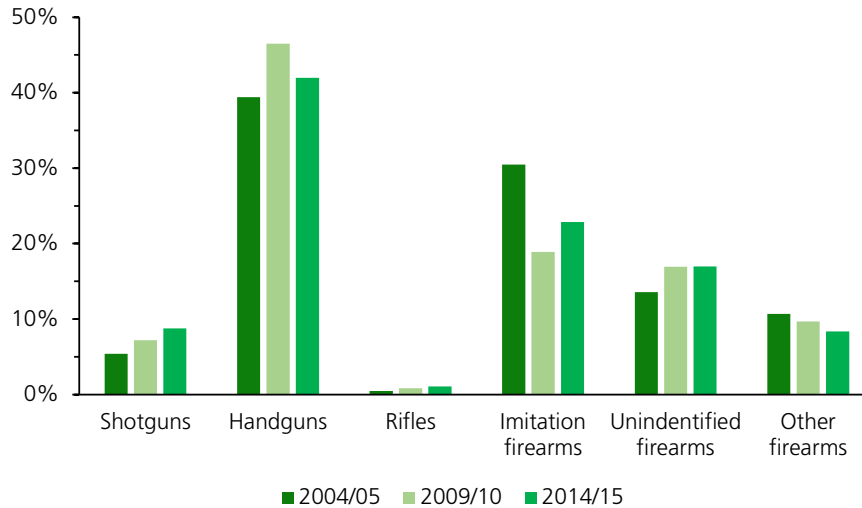


Between the years ending March 2003 and March 2015 the number of VATP and robbery offences which were committed with a firearm (air and non-air) fell by 65%. The number of burglary and criminal damage offences both reduced by around 77% between the same period.

1.3 Type of firearm used

For the year ending December 2015 handguns were the most commonly used firearm (excluding air), with such offences accounting for 42% of all firearm offences. This is a decrease of 2 percentage points compared to the year ending December 2014.

Firearm offences by non-air firearm type



Over the period shown handguns were the most common non-air firearm, consistently accounting for over 40% of non-air firearm offences. The proportion of non-air offences by shotguns increased 3 percentage points between 2004/05 and 2014/15. During 2004/05 imitation firearms accounted for a third of all non-air firearm offences – by 2014/15 this proportion had reduced by 7 percentage points.

For the year ending March 2015 air based firearms accounted for 38% of all firearm offences (air and non-air). This is a decrease of 19 percentage points from 2002/03 where air firearms accounted for 57% of all offences.

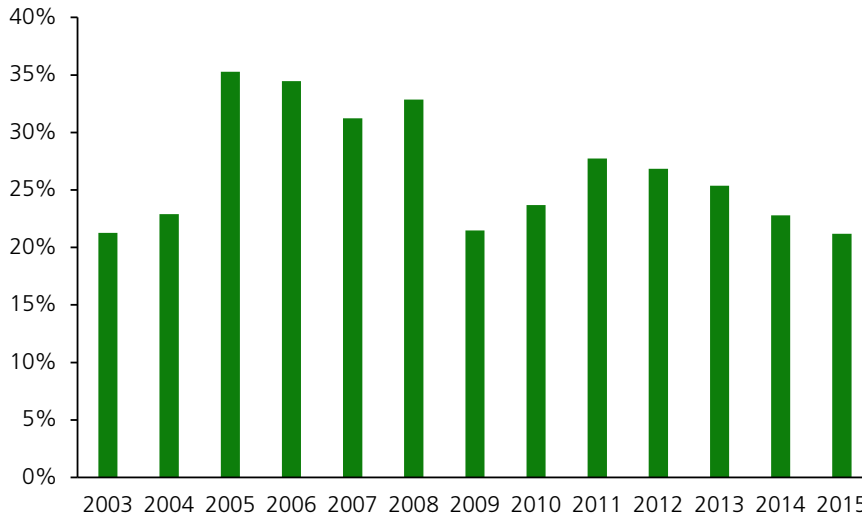
1.4 Firearm injuries

For the year ending March 2015 there were just over 1,000 non-air firearm offences in which an individual was injured. This is a decrease of 6% on the same period in 2014.

Of the occurrences where someone was injured only 2% (19) resulted in a fatal injury. There was a serious injury in 14% (146) of occurrences, and a slight injury in 84% (876).

For all firearm offences (air and non-air) 1,340 resulted in an individual sustaining some sort of injury. The proportions of severity were nearly identical to non-air firearm offences.

Proportion of non-air firearm offences resulting in injury, year ending March



The proportion of non-air firearm offences resulting in some degree of injury was the same in the year ending March 2015 as it was for the year ending March 2003 (21%). In the middle of the 2000s the proportion of non-air firearm offences which resulted in injury increased by around 12 percentage points between 2004 and 2005. Between 2005 and 2008 this proportion was maintained at just over a third.

In the year ending March 2009 there was a drop in the proportion of non-air offences resulting in injury (12 percentage points). The proportion rose for the following two years before reducing in 2012.

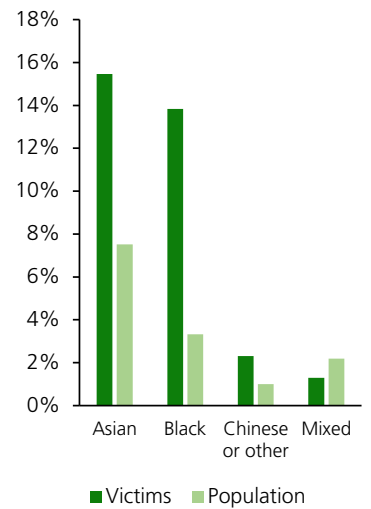
Victims of non-air firearm offences are predominantly between 15 and 34 years of age, accounting for over 55% of victims. 20-24 year olds represented the highest proportion of victims (17%) yet this age group only represents 7% of the general population.

Victims of non-air firearm offences who were white accounted for 67% of all victims in the year ending March 2015 and account for around 86% of the general population. All other ethnicities, except for mixed, were victims of non-air firearm offences at a higher rate than would be expected based on their representation in the general population.

Age profile of non-air firearm victims, 2014/15

Age	Victims	Population
0-4	0%	6%
5-9	2%	6%
10-14	7%	5%
15-19	13%	6%
20-24	17%	7%
25-29	14%	7%
30-34	11%	7%
35-39	9%	6%
40-44	8%	7%
45-49	7%	7%
50-54	5%	7%
55-59	4%	6%
60-64	2%	5%
65-69	1%	6%
70-74	1%	4%
75+	1%	8%

Non-white ethnicity of non-air firearm victims, 2014/15



2. Appendix tables

Table 1: Firearm offences by firearm type, year ending March

	Shotguns	Handguns	Rifles	Imitation firearms	Unidentified firearms	Other firearms	Air weapons	Total	Shotguns	Handguns	Rifles	Imitation firearms	Unidentified firearms	Other firearms	Air weapons	Total
2002/03	672	5,549	52	1,814	1,431	730	13,822	24,070	3%	23%	0%	8%	6%	3%	57%	100%
2003/04	718	5,144	48	2,146	1,356	926	13,756	24,094	3%	21%	0%	9%	6%	4%	57%	100%
2004/05	597	4,360	54	3,373	1,500	1,185	11,824	22,893	3%	19%	0%	15%	7%	5%	52%	100%
2005/06	642	4,672	71	3,277	1,362	1,064	10,438	21,526	3%	22%	0%	15%	6%	5%	48%	100%
2006/07	612	4,173	69	2,516	1,276	999	8,836	18,481	3%	23%	0%	14%	7%	5%	48%	100%
2007/08	602	4,172	71	2,561	1,325	1,134	7,478	17,343	3%	24%	0%	15%	8%	7%	43%	100%
2008/09	618	4,273	89	1,507	953	759	6,041	14,240	4%	30%	1%	11%	7%	5%	42%	100%
2009/10	581	3,757	67	1,526	1,368	783	4,931	13,013	4%	29%	1%	12%	11%	6%	38%	100%
2010/11	611	3,107	74	1,618	958	672	4,295	11,335	5%	27%	1%	14%	8%	6%	38%	100%
2011/12	494	2,655	56	1,387	834	596	3,510	9,532	5%	28%	1%	15%	9%	6%	37%	100%
2012/13	453	2,256	43	1,226	724	456	2,977	8,135	6%	28%	1%	15%	9%	6%	37%	100%
2013/14	387	2,134	55	1,142	698	440	2,873	7,729	5%	28%	1%	15%	9%	6%	37%	100%
2014/15	431	2,062	52	1,123	833	411	2,954	7,866	5%	26%	1%	14%	11%	5%	38%	100%
2014	402	2,143	55	1,110	798	414	-	4,922	8%	44%	1%	23%	16%	8%	-	100%
2015	409	2,131	43	1,353	734	452	-	5,122	8%	42%	1%	26%	14%	9%	-	100%

Notes:

2014 and 2015 are year ending December

More explicit guidelines for the classification of weapons introduced on 1 April 2004 may have increased the recording of firearm offences, particularly those committed by imitation weapons

The Violent Crime Reduction Act introduced in October 2007 made it illegal to import or sell imitation firearms and tightened the rules for the manufacture and sale of certain

imitation firearms include weapons such as BB guns which can fire small plastic pellets at low velocity

Other firearms include CS Gas / pepper spray, stun guns and other weapons

- indicates not included in source data

Source:

ONS, Crime in England & Wales: year ending December 2015, Table 12

ONS, Crime in England & Wales: year ending March 2015, Figure 3.2

10 Firearm Crime Statistics: England & Wales

Table 2: Firearm offences (excluding firearm offences) by police force area, year ending March

Police force	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Per 100,000 head of population
Avon & Somerset	116	95	107	107	100	82	63	78	5
Bedfordshire	83	64	96	105	64	49	77	86	13
Cambridgeshire	30	34	65	63	34	20	40	42	5
Cheshire	59	61	54	62	61	52	65	54	5
Cleveland	15	34	21	20	25	10	13	14	2
Cumbria	18	28	36	60	28	15	15	33	7
Derbyshire	70	75	69	102	62	54	45	67	6
Devon & Cornwall	111	70	61	64	133	84	116	122	7
Dorset	21	16	32	47	33	24	29	19	3
Durham	45	22	10	24	15	16	11	14	2
Dyfed-Powys	25	7	17	16	17	11	8	14	3
Essex	260	176	154	135	137	131	154	176	10
Gloucestershire	43	52	34	47	51	29	27	27	4
Greater Manchester	1,160	827	709	504	365	387	397	437	16
Gwent	47	36	29	34	40	24	26	12	2
Hampshire	100	75	100	79	71	72	57	84	4
Hertfordshire	112	68	45	39	31	16	15	8	1
Humberside	58	62	43	42	49	43	44	33	4
Kent	82	93	64	46	30	48	63	37	2
Lancashire	349	207	215	179	126	100	116	116	8
Leicestershire	134	127	92	80	85	78	59	60	6
Lincolnshire	41	16	19	17	18	21	17	16	2
London, City of	3	3	0	1	3	2	2	2	-
Merseyside	398	352	258	226	248	211	212	162	12
Metropolitan Police	3,396	3,087	3,524	2,747	2,479	1,959	1,594	1,652	19
Norfolk	43	29	21	24	15	4	4	15	2
North Wales	53	42	35	39	21	20	18	15	2
North Yorkshire	17	11	23	33	20	19	16	11	1
Northamptonshire	164	112	81	85	93	50	31	35	5
Northumbria	78	51	52	68	38	42	44	52	4
Nottinghamshire	240	204	137	103	99	104	93	66	6
South Wales	84	54	74	63	41	39	48	60	5
South Yorkshire	202	144	121	134	84	163	164	161	12
Staffordshire	123	44	40	53	45	27	41	32	3
Suffolk	38	25	16	26	20	22	16	59	8
Surrey	70	66	84	83	54	48	39	32	3
Sussex	69	65	39	49	31	34	68	90	5
Thames Valley	322	214	158	144	123	167	131	47	2
Warwickshire	107	56	57	50	51	52	40	23	4
West Mercia	124	78	84	80	50	50	56	45	4
West Midlands	974	985	903	912	648	499	540	562	20
West Yorkshire	332	287	267	218	257	253	224	221	10
Wiltshire	49	45	36	30	27	27	18	21	3

Notes:

Per 100,000 head of population for year ending March 2015

- indicates suppressed due to small population size of the police force area

Source:

ONS, Focus on Violent Crime and Sexual Offences: year ending March 2015

Table 3: Firearm offences by offence group, year ending March

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2014-2015 % change
Non-air firearms														
Violence against the person	2,561	2,921	4,461	3,991	3,142	3,282	2,216	2,351	2,266	1,937	1,592	1,462	1,540	+5.3%
Robbery	4,630	4,032	3,676	4,054	3,904	3,939	3,576	3,607	2,925	2,533	2,172	1,951	1,691	-13.3%
Burglary	471	506	329	286	191	164	157	195	147	139	97	112	108	-3.6%
Criminal damage	460	575	730	814	791	750	528	451	374	333	335	330	320	-3.0%
Public fear, alarm or distress	127	129	240	253	240	265	263	259	261	203	200	225	317	+40.9%
Possession of weapons	1,550	1,723	1,213	1,298	1,028	1,167	1,193	971	828	653	557	579	674	+16.4%
Other firearm offences	449	452	420	392	349	298	266	248	239	224	205	197	262	+33.0%
All non-air firearm offences	10,248	10,338	11,069	11,088	9,645	9,865	8,199	8,082	7,040	6,022	5,158	4,856	4,912	+1.2%
All firearm offences														
Violence against the person	5,456	6,000	6,139	5,327	4,329	4,333	3,045	3,111	2,822	2,366	2,017	1,862	1,908	+2.5%
Robbery	4,776	4,117	3,744	4,121	3,977	4,014	3,615	3,663	2,975	2,567	2,206	1,977	1,716	-13.2%
Burglary	494	533	341	298	206	172	167	205	155	151	102	114	112	-1.8%
Criminal damage	10,956	10,948	10,038	8,979	7,691	6,474	5,158	4,097	3,571	3,002	2,426	2,439	2,513	+3.0%
Public fear, alarm or distress ⁶	127	129	297	321	305	312	307	306	314	230	217	246	334	+36.0%
Possession of weapons ⁶	1,550	1,723	1,510	1,654	1,338	1,440	1,456	1,154	994	781	657	673	785	+17.0%
Other firearm offences	711	644	824	826	635	598	492	477	504	435	510	418	498	+19.1%
All firearm offences	24,070	24,094	22,893	21,526	18,481	17,343	14,240	13,013	11,335	9,532	8,135	7,729	7,866	+1.8%

Note:

Prior to year ending March 2005, air weapon offences were recorded as homicide, attempted murder, other violence against the person, robbery, burglary, criminal damage or other offences. Therefore, possession of weapons and public fear alarm or distress offences for air weapons prior to this date are included in 'other' within violence against the person offences.

Source:

ONS, Focus on Violent Crime and Sexual Offences: year ending March 2015

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Table 4: Firearm offences resulting in injury, year ending March

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2014-2015 % change
Non-air firearms														
Total non-air weapon injuries	2,179	2,367	3,904	3,822	3,011	3,241	1,760	1,914	1,952	1,617	1,309	1,107	1,041	-6.0%
Fatal injury	80	68	76	49	56	53	39	39	59	42	30	27	19	-29.6%
Serious injury	416	437	412	476	412	402	319	337	295	255	170	162	146	-9.9%
Slight injury	1,683	1,862	3,416	3,297	2,543	2,786	1,402	1,538	1,598	1,320	1,109	918	876	-4.6%
No injury	8,069	7,971	7,165	7,266	6,634	6,624	6,439	6,168	5,088	4,405	3,849	3,749	3,871	+3.3%
All non-air firearm offences	10,248	10,338	11,069	11,088	9,645	9,865	8,199	8,082	7,040	6,022	5,158	4,856	4,912	+1.2%
All firearm offences														
Total weapon injuries	4,556	4,762	5,402	5,004	4,064	4,164	2,453	2,570	2,402	1,972	1,668	1,433	1,340	-6.5%
Fatal injury	81	68	77	50	59	53	39	40	59	42	30	29	19	-34.5%
Serious injury	572	594	556	595	507	488	391	404	330	285	204	208	183	-12.0%
Slight injury	3,903	4,100	4,769	4,359	3,498	3,623	2,023	2,126	2,013	1,645	1,434	1,196	1,138	-4.8%
No injury	19,514	19,332	17,491	16,522	13,819	13,179	11,787	10,443	8,933	7,547	6,467	6,296	6,526	+3.7%
All firearm offences	24,070	24,094	22,893	21,526	17,883	17,343	14,240	13,013	11,335	9,519	8,135	7,729	7,866	+1.8%

Notes:

Injuries could be caused by either the firearm being fired or used as a blunt instrument.

'Fatal injury' includes the 12 people killed by Derrick Bird on 2 June 2010.

Number of fatal injuries where a firearm has been involved in an offence may differ from the number of homicides by shooting. This is due to offences where a firearm has been involved but shooting has not been the principal method of killing. Additionally, Homicide Index figures include crossbows which are excluded from the firearms collection.

A serious injury is one which requires a stay in hospital or involves fractures, concussion, severe general shock, penetration by a bullet or multiple shot wounds.

Source:

ONS, Focus on Violent Crime and Sexual Offences: year ending March 2015

Table 5: Age and ethnicity profile of non-air firearm offence victims, year ending March 2015

	Age			Ethnicity	
	Victims	Population		Victims	Population
0-4	0%	6%	Asian or Asian British	15%	8%
5-9	2%	6%	Black or Black British	14%	3%
10-14	7%	5%	Chinese or other	2%	1%
15-19	13%	6%	Mixed	1%	2%
20-24	17%	7%	White	67%	86%
25-29	14%	7%			
30-34	11%	7%			
35-39	9%	6%			
40-44	8%	7%			
45-49	7%	7%			
50-54	5%	7%			
55-59	4%	6%			
60-64	2%	5%			
65-69	1%	6%			
70-74	1%	4%			
75+	1%	8%			

Notes:

Excludes 448 cases where victim age was unknown

Excludes 805 cases where victim ethnicity was coded 'not applicable'

Population figures based on mid-2014 estimates from ONS

Source:

ONS, Focus on Violent Crime and Sexual Offences: year ending March 2015

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