



BRIEFING PAPER

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Air weapons

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Contents:

1. Regulation
2. Statistics
3. Government review
4. Appendix: Data tables



Contents

Summary	3
1. Regulation	5
1.1 Age restrictions	5
1.2 Offences	6
1.3 Licensing	6
2. Statistics	9
2.1 Offences	9
2.2 Prosecutions	10
2.3 Attacks on animals	10
2.4 Data for Scotland	11
3. Government review	12
3.1 Government proposals	12
3.2 Other issues	13
4. Appendix: Data tables	15

Summary

Air weapons discharge a projectile by means of compressed air or carbon dioxide. Low-powered air weapons are commonly possessed for target shooting and vermin control.

Licensing

The licensing of air weapons is different across the UK:

- In England and Wales there is no need to acquire a licence to hold an air weapon.
- In Scotland air weapons owners need a [specific air weapons licence](#).
- In Northern Ireland air weapons owners need a [firearms licence](#).

Age restrictions

It is an offence to [sell or gift an air weapon](#) (or ammunition) to a person under 18. It is also an offence to [fail to take reasonable precautions](#) to prevent those under the age of 18 from gaining illegal possession of the air weapon.

Whilst people under the age of 18 cannot buy, hire or be gifted an air weapon, they may possess an air weapon under certain circumstances. Under 18s may [possess an air weapon](#) if:

- They are supervised by someone aged 21 or over,
- They are shooting as a member of an approved target shooting club,
- They are shooting at a shooting gallery/ rifle range,
- They are aged 14 or older and are shooting on private premises with the consent of the occupier.

Statistics

In the year ending March 2019, there were 3,028 recorded crimes involving air weapons in England and Wales, which accounted for just under one third of all crimes involving firearms.

There are no official statistics on attacks on animals using an air weapon, however the RSPCA records around 900 such cases per year, relating to around 1,100 animals.

Since 1 January 2017, Scotland has had a system of licensing air weapons. At the latest count (2014/15), the number of air weapons offences per 100,000 people was around the same rate in Scotland as in England and Wales.

Since 2006-07 the number of recorded air weapons offences [fell by three quarters in Scotland](#) (-74%). This was a slightly higher relative [decrease than in England and Wales](#) over the same period (-64%).

Government review

The Government announced a [review of air weapons regulation](#) in England and Wales on 10 October 2017. The review was commissioned following a request from a Dr Peter Dean (Her Majesty's Senior Coroner for Suffolk), who wrote to the Minister following the death of 13-year-old Benjamin Wragge. Benjamin died after being accidentally shot with an air weapon.

The Government said that the review would (amongst other things) consider "evidence from Scotland and Northern Ireland, where air weapons are subject to a licensing regime."

Animal welfare groups and the families of children who have been accidentally shot by air weapons have long supported the introduction of a licensing system for England and Wales. Members of the sport shooting community have opposed the idea. They say a licensing system would create a barrier for prospective sport shooters.

The Government published the findings of their review in November 2020 as part of its [consultation on firearms safety](#). It has decided not to introduce a licensing regime for England and Wales. Instead it is proposing to amend the existing age restrictions for air weapons. It said this represents "targeted action which will address the key risks without introducing additional administration and cost for police forces or air weapon users".

The Government is proposing to:

- amend the existing offence of failing to take reasonable precautions to prevent children accessing air weapons. The Government is proposing to clarify that 'reasonable precautions' must include locking the air weapon out of sight when not in use and storing the ammunition separately
- removing an exemption which currently allows children aged over fourteen to use an air weapon on private land unsupervised with the permission of its occupier.

1. Regulation

In general, firearms legislation is a reserved issue for the UK Parliament. However, the Scottish Parliament has powers, which it has exercised, to legislate for a licensing scheme for air weapons. This means that, whilst legislation relating to age restrictions and the misuse of air weapons apply across Great Britain, there is separate legislation in Scotland which applies to the licensing of air weapons.

Firearms legislation for Northern Ireland is separate from the rest of the UK but it still remains the preserve of the UK Parliament. The principal piece of legislation in Northern Ireland is the [Firearms \(Northern Ireland\) Order 2004](#). In general, firearms controls are more restrictive in Northern Ireland.

What are air weapons?

Air weapons discharge a projectile by means of compressed air or carbon dioxide. The [Firearms Act 1968](#) defines air weapons as air rifles, air pistols and air guns, which are not otherwise prohibited.¹

Guns with a muzzle energy below one joule, for example most BB guns and paintball guns, are not regarded as firearms and are therefore not considered air weapons.²

Airsoft guns are also not considered air weapons. There is a specific exemption for airsoft guns from firearms legislation.³ [Section 57A](#) of the *Firearms Act 1968* defines an airsoft gun as a barrelled weapon that can only discharge a plastic missile and is not capable of discharging a missile above 2.5 joules for a single shot, or 1.3 joules for an automatic shot.

1.1 Age restrictions

It is an offence for a person under the age of 18 to purchase or hire an air weapon (or ammunition for an air weapon). It is an offence to sell or gift an air weapon (or ammunition) to a person under 18.⁴ It is also an offence to fail to take reasonable precautions to prevent those under the age of 18 from gaining illegal possession of the air weapon.⁵

Whilst people under the age of 18 cannot buy, hire or be gifted an air weapon, they may possess an air weapon under certain circumstances. Under 18s may possess an air weapon if:⁶

- They are supervised by someone aged 21 or over,
- They are shooting as a member of an approved target shooting club,
- They are shooting at a shooting gallery/ rifle range,
- They are aged 14 or older and are shooting on private premises with the consent of the occupier.

¹ Section 1(3)(b), [Firearms Act 1968](#)

² Home Office, [Air Weapons: A brief guide to safety](#), October 2017

³ Section 57(1)(1), [Firearms Act 1968](#) and section 57(1B), [Firearms Act 1968](#)

⁴ [Section 24, Firearms Act 1968](#), see also Home Office, [Air weapons: A brief guide to safety](#), October 2017

⁵ [s46, Crime and Security Act 2010](#)

⁶ Home Office, [Air weapons: A brief guide to safety](#), October 2017

1.2 Offences

There are a number of offences relating to the misuse of air weapons. The government have produced a leaflet entitled [Air Weapons: a brief guide to safety](#) (October 2017), which lists relevant offences:

- It is an offence for any person to use an air weapon for firing a pellet beyond the boundaries of any premises
- It is an offence for a supervising adult to allow a person under the age of 18 to use an air weapon for firing a pellet beyond the boundaries of any premises.
- It is an offence to have an air weapon in a public place without a reasonable excuse. It is ultimately for the courts to decide what a reasonable excuse is. However, it might include carrying a weapon to and from a shooting club, or taking a new weapon home from a dealer.
- It is an offence to trespass with an air weapon.
- ...
- It is an offence to fire an air weapon without lawful authority or excuse within 50 feet (15 metres) of the centre of a public road in such a way as to cause a road user to be injured, interrupted or endangered.
- ...
- It is an offence to have an air weapon with intent to damage or to destroy property, or to be reckless as to whether property would be damaged or destroyed.
- It is an offence to have an air weapon with intent to endanger life.⁷

Prohibition

Those who have been sentenced to a term of imprisonment of between three months and three years are prohibited from possessing an air weapon (or other firearm or ammunition) for five years. Those who have been sentenced to a term of imprisonment for three years or more years are prohibited for life.⁸

1.3 Licensing

England and Wales

In England and Wales most people (over the age of 18) can own most types of air weapon without the need for a licence. This means that an individual can buy an air weapon without the approval of the police, as is normally required for other types of firearms.

The [Firearms Act 1968](#) sets out the licensing regime for firearms. [Subsection 1\(3\)\(b\)](#) exempts certain types of air weapons from these provisions.⁹

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Home Office, [Air Weapons: a brief guide to safety](#), October 2017

⁹ [Firearms Act 1968](#) and Crown Prosecution Service, [Firearms](#) [last accessed 18/12/2018]

There are two types of air weapon which are not included in this exemption:

- **Air weapons that have a self-contained gas cartridge system.** Individuals require the authority of the Home Secretary to possess, purchase or acquire these air weapons.¹⁰
- **Air weapons that are considered ‘specially dangerous’,** as defined by the [Firearms \(Dangerous Air Weapons\) Rules 1969](#).¹¹ These are air-weapons with kinetic energy in excess of 6 ft lbs or, for air weapons that are not air pistols, 12 ft lbs. Individuals require a firearms licence issued by the police.¹²

Scotland

The *Scotland Act 2012* devolved powers to the Scottish Parliament to license air weapons.¹³

The Scottish Government ran a consultation, [Proposals for Licensing Air Weapons in Scotland](#), between December 2012 and March 2013. They published [an analysis of responses](#) to this consultation in July 2013.

On the 3 September 2013, during his speech on the Scottish Government’s Programme for Government 2013-14, the then First Minister, Alex Salmond, said his Government would “introduce a new licensing system for air weapons”.¹⁴

Air Weapons and Licensing (Scotland) Act 2015

The [Air Weapons and Licensing \(Scotland\) Act 2015](#) created a licensing regime for air weapons in Scotland.

From the 31st of December 2016 it became an offence to use, possess, purchase or acquire an air weapon in Scotland without holding an air weapon certificate. Someone who commits such an offence can be imprisoned for a term not exceeding 12 months or receive a fine, or both. On conviction on indictment, this rises to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 2 years or a fine, or both.¹⁵

The Scottish air weapons license scheme is separate from licenses issued for other types of firearms across the UK. Those who hold a valid firearm certificate issued prior to 31st of December 2016, do not need to apply for a separate air weapon certificate until their existing certificate expires. Those who have obtained a firearm certificate after this date will need to apply for a separate air weapons license if they wish to possess an air weapon in addition to their licensed firearm.¹⁶

The rules for acquiring and renewing a Scottish air weapons license are similar to those used for regular firearms licenses. As with firearms licenses:

¹⁰ [Firearms Act 1968](#), section 5(1)(af)

¹¹ [Firearms \(Dangerous Air Weapons\) Rules 1969](#), section 2

¹² Crown Prosecution Service, [Firearms](#) [last accessed 18/12/2018]

¹³ [Scotland Act 2012, part 1, section 10](#)

¹⁴ Scottish Parliament, [Meeting of the Parliament 03 September 2013](#), Column 21875

¹⁵ Police Scotland, [Air Weapon Licensing: Legislation](#) [last accessed 18/12/2018]

¹⁶ Police Scotland, [Air Weapon Licensing](#) [last accessed 18/12/2018]

8 Air weapons

- police carry out checks and issue licenses to those who demonstrate they have a reasonable reason to have an air weapon and do not pose a threat to public safety;
- certificate owners have to apply for their licenses to be renewed by police once they expire; and
- there is an administration fee applied to the certificate.¹⁷

Unlike firearms licenses those who are under the age of 18 but over the age of 14 can apply for a Scottish air weapons license. However, in accordance with the law on age restrictions, under 18s cannot buy, hire or own air weapons.¹⁸

Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland you need a firearms license to hold an air weapon in the same way as you would need one for any licensed firearm.¹⁹

The principal piece of firearms legislation in Northern Ireland is the [Firearms \(Northern Ireland\) Order 2004](#). In general firearms controls are more restrictive in Northern Ireland than in the rest of the UK.²⁰ Unlike in the *Firearms Act 1968* (which is the principal legislation in England and Wales) the *Firearms (Northern Ireland) Order 2004* does not exempt air weapons from the firearms licensing scheme.

¹⁷ Police Scotland, [Air Weapon Licensing: Application Process](#), [last accessed 18/12/2018] see also [Air Weapons and Licensing \(Scotland\) Act 2015](#), part 1, section 5

¹⁸ Myscot.gov, [License an air weapon](#) [last accessed 18/12/2018]

¹⁹ Northern Ireland Office, [Guidance: Firearms and explosives controls in Northern Ireland](#), April 2013 see also PSNI, [Know the Law: The Firearms \(NI\) Order 2004](#) [last accessed 18/12/18]

²⁰ Ibid

2. Statistics

2.1 Offences

Statistics on crimes involving air weapons in England and Wales are published annually by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). These show police-recorded crime figures, which are administrative data and not designated as national statistics. Figures for Scotland are published separately by the Scottish Government.

Number of offences

In the year ending March 2019, there were 3,028 recorded crimes involving air weapons in England and Wales, which accounted for just under one third of all crimes involving firearms.²¹

This number was slightly higher than in the previous year but much lower than the number in 2010 (4,900) and 2003 (13,800). The number of recorded air weapons offences has been in relatively steady decline for at least the past 16 years.

A table showing the number per year is included in the appendix.

Type of offence

Separate statistics are produced by the ONS on the type of offences involving air weapons and whether or not the offence resulted in injury.²²

In 2015/16, the latest year available at the time of publication, the most common type of offence involving an air weapon was criminal damage (2,200 offences or 67% of air weapons offences), followed by violence against the person (11% of offences).

Injury

In the year 2018/19, 262 offences involving air weapons resulted in injury (9% of total offences).²³ Of these, 11% resulted in 'serious' injury and the remainder caused 'slight' injury.

Between 2002/03 and 2018/19, there were around 1,200 serious injuries and 12 deaths caused by offences involving air weapons.²⁴

A table showing the number and severity of injuries is included in the appendix.

The statistics also show the age profile of victims of air weapons offences.²⁵ In 2018/19, 19% of air weapon victims were aged 10-19,

²¹ ONS [Offences involving the use of weapons: data tables](#), table 2.

²² ONS [Focus on Violent Crime and Sexual Offences: Year ending March 2016](#): Appendix table 3.08

²³ ONS, [Offences involving the use of weapons: data tables](#), table 5.

²⁴ Other statistics show 10 homicides involving air weapons. This is because the statistics on air weapons offences by type include those involving crossbows but the injury statistics do not. In 2010, there was a murder where a crossbow was the principal weapon used.

²⁵ ONS, [Offences involving the use of weapons: data tables](#), table 13.

while people in this age group made up only 11% of the population. A table of this data is included in the appendix.

2.2 Prosecutions

Currently, the only data published on prosecutions of air weapons offences are for the offence 'firing an air weapon beyond premises' (prohibited under Sections 23(1) and (4) of the *Firearms Act 1968* and Section 34 of the *Violent Crime Reduction Act 2006*).

In 2019, there were 6 prosecutions and 5 convictions for 'firing an air weapon beyond premises'.²⁶ Since 2018, the number of prosecutions has been low compared to previous years. In 2017 there had been 21 prosecutions and 12 convictions, and the 2018 figures (5 prosecutions and 4 convictions) were the lowest for at least eleven years.

In total, between 2008 and 2019, there were 266 prosecutions for this offence, and 216 convictions. There were also 127 cautions issued during this time.

2.3 Attacks on animals

There are no official statistics on attacks on animals but the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) has periodically released figures on the number of calls it receives relating to attacks on animals using air weapons.

In January 2018, the RSPCA claimed in a press release that it had received 4,500 calls in five years (2013-2017) alleging attacks on animals using air weapons. This averages at around 900 calls per year.²⁷

These attacks related to at least 5,600 animals or around 1,100 per year.²⁸ The most commonly attacked animals in 2017, according to these reports, were wild birds, followed by cats, wild mammals, and dogs.

Similar data for 2018 showed that there were 258 reported attacks on cats and 73 attacks on dogs, although a full breakdown by animal type is not available.²⁹ The appendix includes a table showing these figures.³⁰

The RSPCA has also released figures showing the areas where they received the most complaints about animals being injured by air weapons. In 2018, Yorkshire and the Humber had the most reported attacks, as a region.

²⁶ Ministry of Justice [Criminal Justice Statistics Quarterly: December 2017, Outcomes by Offence data tool](#).

²⁷ RSPCA press release 'RSPCA calls for airgun licensing after receiving 4,500 calls in five years', 30 January 2018 [not publicly available]

²⁸ These figures come from a separate RSPCA briefing which shows the number of animals of certain types (cats, dogs, birds, and wild mammals) which were the target of attacks reported in calls to the RSPCA.

²⁹ RSPCA press release, 'RSPCA calls for air gun controls, after 767 animal shootings last year', July 2019 [not publicly available]

³⁰ RSPCA 'Air weapon misuse and its impact on animals', 08 November 2018 [not publicly available]

2.4 Data for Scotland

Since 1 January 2017, Scotland has had a system of licensing air weapons.

The BBC reported that by mid-2017 around 15,000 people had applied for licenses and 21,000 weapons had been surrendered to the police.³¹

There were 127 recorded offences in which an air weapon was the main firearm used in Scotland in 2017/18.³² This was equivalent to around 2 such offences per 100,000 people, lower than the rate of around 5 per 100,000 in England and Wales.³³

Since 2006/07 the number of recorded air weapons offences fell by four fifths (81%). This was a slightly higher relative decrease than in England and Wales over the same period (-67%).³⁴

As noted in the [Recorded crime in Scotland 2017-2018](#):

In 2017-18, i.e. the first full year for which statistics are available there were 396 air weapons licensing offences recorded by the police.³⁵

The number of recorded licensing offences in 2018/19 has not been published.

³¹ BBC Police '[Scotland hail air weapon law 'success'](#)', 30 June 2017.

³² Scottish Government [Recorded Crimes and Offences Involving Firearms, Scotland, 2016/17 and 2017/18](#)

³³ ONS [Population estimates for the UK, England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland: mid-2018](#)

³⁴ ONS [Offences involving the use of weapons: data tables](#), table 2.

³⁵ Scottish Government, [Recorded crime in Scotland 2017-2018](#), p60. The newest version at the time of writing is [Recorded crime in Scotland: 2018-19](#) but this does not include the number of air weapons licensing offences.

3. Government review

The Government announced a review of air weapons regulation in England and Wales on 10 October 2017.³⁶ The announcement came following a request from a Dr Peter Dean (Her Majesty's Senior Coroner for Suffolk), who wrote to the Minister following the death of 13-year-old Benjamin Wragge, who was accidentally shot with an air weapon.³⁷

The review considered "whether existing controls are sufficient to prevent children getting hold of air weapons".³⁸ It looked at:

- the storage and safe keeping of air weapons.³⁹
- whether manufacturing standards could be amended to prevent accidental discharge of air weapons or to prevent modification of air weapons post-sale in order to increase their power.⁴⁰
- Evidence of the effectiveness of the licensing regimes in Scotland and Northern Ireland.⁴¹
- the effect of current exemptions which allow children to legally possess air weapons in certain circumstances.⁴²

Interested parties were told to write to the Home Office before 8 February 2018.⁴³ The Government published a summary of submissions to the review and their resulting conclusions in November 2020.⁴⁴

3.1 Government proposals

Following the review, the Government are proposing two amendments to the existing regulation of air weapons. They are proposing to:⁴⁵

- Remove an exception which allows children under the age of 14 to possess an air weapon unsupervised on private land with the consent of the occupier; and,
- Amend the existing offence of failing to take reasonable precautions to prevent children gaining access to air weapons to clarify that "reasonable precautions" must include locking air weapons and ammunition separately and out of sight when not in use.

The Government is now consulting on the details of these proposals as part of its consultation on [firearms safety](#). The consultation opened in November 2020 and closes on 16 February 2021.

³⁶ Home Office, [Home Office to review air weapons regulation in England and Wales](#), 10th October 2017

³⁷ *The Guardian*, "[Boy, 13, died after air rifle accidentally discharged, inquest hears](#)", 8 June 2017 see also *BBC News*, "[Ben Wragge's air rifle death accidental](#)", 8 June 2017

³⁸ Home Office, [Home Office writes to interested parties on air weapon regulation](#), 12 December 2017

³⁹ *Ibid*

⁴⁰ *Ibid*

⁴¹ *Ibid*

⁴² [HC Deb. Offensive Weapons Bill: Report Stage](#), 28 November 2018, c300.

⁴³ *Ibid*

⁴⁴ Home Office, [Firearms safety: Government consultation](#), 28 November 2020, p11-p15

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, p15

Safe keeping of air weapons

It is an offence to “fail to take reasonable precautions” to prevent children accessing air weapons illegally.⁴⁶ The Government are proposing to amend this offence to clarify what is meant by “reasonable precautions”. Policing stakeholders have suggested the offence is “subjective” and that “further clarity may be helpful”.⁴⁷

The Government is proposing to amend this offence to clarify that:

‘reasonable precautions’ must include locking the air weapon out of sight when not in use and storing the ammunition separately.⁴⁸

However, they are not proposing to require air weapons are stored in a gun cabinet.⁴⁹

Supervising children with air weapons

Children over the age of 14 can presently legally possess an air weapon without supervision when on private land with consent. The Government is proposing to remove this exemption so that children must always be supervised by someone over the age of 21 when using an air weapon.⁵⁰

3.2 Other issues

Licensing system

There have long been calls for a licensing system for air weapons in England and Wales. Those in favour say a licensing system would help prevent animal attacks and reduce the likelihood that children get hold of air weapons.⁵¹

Those who represent sport shooters and rural communities are opposed to a licensing system. They say current regulation is strong enough and further restrictions will create barriers to introducing people to sport shooting.⁵²

The Government have decided not to introduce a licensing system for air weapons in England and Wales. They say their proposals to amend existing air weapon regulations represents “targeted action which will address the key risks without introducing additional administration and cost for police forces or air weapon users”.⁵³

⁴⁶ [s46, Crime and Security Act 2010](#)

⁴⁷ Home Office, [Firearms safety: Government consultation](#), 28 November 2020, p13

⁴⁸ Ibid

⁴⁹ Ibid

⁵⁰ Ibid

⁵¹ Home Office, [Firearms safety: Government consultation](#), 28 November 2020, p13 & 14; RSPCA, [We're caring for a young cat shot with airgun](#), February 2018; RSPCA, [Airgun misuse and its impact on animals](#), January 2018; Cats Protection, [Support the Battle for Air Gun Licensing](#), 12 January 2018

⁵² Home Office, [Firearms safety: Government consultation](#), 28 November 2020, p13 & 14; BASC, [Airgun legislation tough enough. BASC tells Home Office](#), 2 February 2018; Countryside Alliance, [Countryside Alliance responds to Home Office Air Weapons Review](#), 6 February 2018

⁵³ Ibid, p14

Manufacturing standards

The Government concluded that it “would not be proportionate” to mandate action regarding manufacturing standards of air weapons. They pledged to keep the issue “under review”.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Home Office, [Firearms safety: Government consultation](#), 28 November 2020, p14

4. Appendix: Data tables

Table 1: Offences recorded by the police in which firearms were reported to have been used, by type of principal weapon

England and Wales, year ending March

	Air weapons	All firearms	Proportion where air weapon was the principal weapon	Change since previous year (air weapons)
2002/03	13,822	24,070	57%	.
2003/04	13,756	24,094	57%	-0.5%
2004/05	11,824	22,893	52%	-14%
2005/06	10,438	21,526	48%	-12%
2006/07	8,836	18,481	48%	-15%
2007/08	7,478	17,343	43%	-15%
2008/09	6,041	14,240	42%	-19%
2009/10	4,931	13,013	38%	-18%
2010/11	4,295	11,335	38%	-13%
2011/12	3,510	9,532	37%	-18%
2012/13	2,977	8,135	37%	-15%
2013/14	2,873	7,729	37%	-3%
2014/15	2,954	7,865	38%	3%
2015/16	3,217	8,399	38%	9%
2016/17	3,203	9,578	33%	0%
2017/18	2,861	9,395	30%	-11%
2018/19	3,028	9,787	31%	6%

Source: ONS [Offences involving the use of weapons: data tables](#), table 2.

Notes: 1. These data are police recorded crime data and are not designated as National Statistics.

2. 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.

3. Further weapon breakdowns were available for the first time on 1 April 2004.

Table 2: Recorded offences involving air weapons, by principal offence type

England and Wales, year ending March

	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Violence against the person	2,895	3,079	1,678	1,336	1,187	1,051	829	760	556	429	425	400	368	363
of which:														
Homicide	1	-	1	1	3	0	0	1	1	0	0	2	0	0
Attempted murder and other most serious violence	144	138	168	133	123	104	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Attempted murder and GBH with intent offences	..	..	..	..	..	..	103	123	67	55	..	..	..	..
Attempted murder, assault with intent to cause serious harm and endangering life	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	71	71	73	73
Other	2,750	2,941	1,509	1,202	1,061	947	726	636	488	374	354	327	295	290
Robbery	146	85	68	67	73	75	39	56	50	34	34	26	25	23
Burglary	23	27	12	12	15	8	10	10	8	12	5	2	4	3
Criminal damage	10,496	10,373	9,308	8,165	6,900	5,724	4,630	3,646	3,197	2,669	2,091	2,109	2,193	2,162
Public fear, alarm or distress	..	..	57	68	65	47	44	47	53	27	17	21	17	19
Possession of weapons	..	..	297	356	310	273	263	183	166	128	100	94	111	81
Other firearm offences	262	192	404	434	286	300	226	229	265	211	305	221	236	566
Total	13,822	13,756	11,824	10,438	8,836	7,478	6,041	4,931	4,295	3,510	2,977	2,873	2,954	3,217

Source: ONS [Focus on Violent Crime and Sexual Offences: Year ending March 2016](#): Appendix table 3.08

Notes: a) The data capture the principal weapon used. Year runs from start of April to end of March.

b) One homicide was recorded in 2010/11 although the injury statistics in the other table do not show a fatal injury in this year. This is because crossbows are included here in the definition of air weapons but not in the injury statistics.

.. denotes no data is recorded.

Table 3: Offences recorded by the police in which air weapons were used resulting in injury, by degree of injury

England and Wales, year ending March

	Fatal injury	Serious injury	Slight injury	Total air weapons offences where injury was caused
2002/03	1	156	2,220	2,377
2003/04	.	157	2,238	2,395
2004/05	1	144	1,353	1,498
2005/06	1	119	1,062	1,182
2006/07	3	95	955	1,053
2007/08	0	86	837	923
2008/09	0	72	621	693
2009/10	1	67	588	656
2010/11	0	35	415	450
2011/12	0	30	325	355
2012/13	0	34	325	359
2013/14	2	46	278	326
2014/15	0	37	262	299
2015/16	0	30	240	270
2016/17	0	25	288	313
2017/18	1	34	263	298
2018/19	2	27	233	262
2002/03	0%	7%	93%	100%
2003/04	.	7%	93%	100%
2004/05	0%	10%	90%	100%
2005/06	0%	10%	90%	100%
2006/07	0%	9%	91%	100%
2007/08	0%	9%	91%	100%
2008/09	0%	10%	90%	100%
2009/10	0%	10%	90%	100%
2010/11	0%	8%	92%	100%
2011/12	0%	8%	92%	100%
2012/13	0%	9%	91%	100%
2013/14	1%	14%	85%	100%
2014/15	0%	12%	88%	100%
2015/16	0%	11%	89%	100%
2016/17	0%	8%	92%	100%
2017/18	0%	11%	88%	100%
2018/19	1%	10%	89%	100%

Source: ONS [Offences involving the use of weapons: data tables](#), table 5.

Notes: 1. Injuries could be caused by either the firearm being fired or used as a blunt instrument.

2. 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.

3. 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.

Table 4: Age profile of offences involving air weapons victims compared to the general population

England and Wales, year ending March 2019

Age	Victims	Full population
0-4	0%	6%
5-9	1%	6%
10-14	6%	6%
15-19	13%	6%
20+	80%	76%

Source: ONS [Offences involving the use of weapons: data tables](#), table 13.

Notes: a. Police recorded crime data are not designated as National Statistics

b. Excludes 52 cases where victim age was unknown

c. The population figures are based on mid-2017 estimates from the Office for National Statistics.

d. Recorded crime covers all indictable and triable-either-way offences. Additionally, a few closely associated summary offences are included.

e. These figures do not include most summary offences, e.g. criminal damage and miscellaneous offences, involving air weapons because victim age is not recorded for these.

f. Age categories are set by the Home Office but ages over 20 have been aggregated.

Table 5: Animals recorded by the RSPCA as having been attacked using air weapons, by animal type

	Wild birds	Cats	Dogs	Wild mammals	Farm birds	Total
Animals attacked						
2011	402	244	145	35	32	858
2012	353	313	70	58	4	798
2013	534	352	105	76	45	1112
2014	662	399	152	55	25	1293
2015	559	359	98	88	30	1134
2016	404	306	59	66	22	857
2017	519	341	111	125	.	1240
Reports of attacks						
2018	.	258	73	.	.	767

Source: RSPCA press releases [not publicly available]: 'RSPCA calls for airgun licensing after receiving 4,500 calls in five years', 30 January 2018; 'Air weapon misuse and its impact on animals', 08 November 2018; 'RSPCA calls for air gun controls, after 767 animal shootings last year', July 2019.

Notes: a) The numbers for years 2011 to 2017 record the number of animals reportedly attacked, while the 2018 numbers relate to reports of attacks. One call can potentially report attacks on more than one animal and can include duplicate incidents.

b) The number of farm birds attacked in 2017 has not been published.

c) The total for each year (except 2017) is only for this selection of animals, i.e. there may have been more reports of attacks on other types of animal.

d) Reports by type of animal in 2018 is only available for some types of animal so the numbers here do not add up to the total.

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