

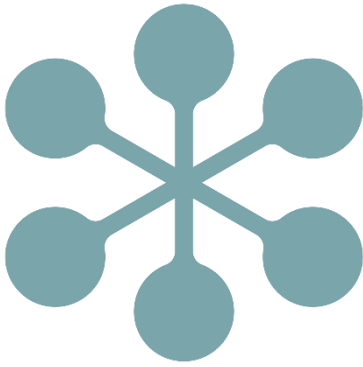
Litmus

Insights on Firearms Safety and Licensing

Prepared for the Te Tari Pūreke – Firearms
Safety Authority

29 January 2026





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Executive summary

Te Tari Pūreke Firearms Safety Authority commissioned Litmus to explore perceptions, experiences, and concerns related to firearms safety and licensing. Eight focus groups (31 people) were conducted in Auckland, Palmerston North, and mid-Canterbury between July and Late November 2025 to gather in-depth insights from a diverse range of licence holders and a smaller group of non-licence holders.

Key Themes

Firearms in everyday life

- Rural communities in New Zealand have a strong tradition of responsible firearms use for practical purposes like pest control, euthanising animals, hunting, and sport. Privacy concerns lead licence holders to keep their firearms ownership private to avoid theft and stigma in both urban and rural communities. Te Tari Pūreke could help communicate the benefits of responsible firearms use to balance the negative perceptions.
- Many non-licence holders in rural areas have close associations with firearms through work, family, or community connections. These individuals often miss critical safety messages, leaving gaps in awareness and knowledge. Expanding communication and engagement strategies to include non-licence holders could enhance safety outcomes and reduce risks.

Perceptions and experiences of Firearms Licensing

- There is broad agreement amongst licence and non-licence holders that firearms licensing is more rigorous than in the past. Many consider the process robust, safeguarded by detailed questioning and referee checks.
- Despite a rigorous licensing process, there is a widespread perception that not all groups are held to the same standard. There is an opportunity for Te Tari Pūreke to be clearer about how a robust regulatory system ensures the right people (those who are ‘fit and proper’) gain a firearms licence, and wider Police’s role is to pursue people who would possess and use firearms in criminal activities.

Perceptions and experiences regarding the Firearms Registry

- Licence holders generally believe that the Firearms Registry contributes to a safer environment, helping ensure that firearms are tracked and managed appropriately and do not fall into the wrong hands.
- A key tension emerges around the perceived uneven burden of compliance with firearm registration. While law-abiding licence holders comply with firearms licensing and the Firearms Registry, there is a widespread belief that gangs and criminals do not, leading to feelings of frustration and unfairness among responsible licence holders. To strengthen public confidence that the rules apply equally to everyone, there is an opportunity to enhance visible enforcement and communication.

Firearms safety education and capability building

- In many rural households, firearms are woven into the fabric of family life. However, not all individuals applying for a firearms licence enter the system with the same level of knowledge or practical experience. Many applicants, particularly those living in urban areas, have not grown up on farms or had prior exposure to firearms use.
- Teenagers are more likely to encounter situations involving alcohol, drugs and peer pressure, and a desire to impress or test boundaries, all of which can increase the likelihood of unsafe firearm behaviours. To sustain firearm safety into adolescence, the regulator should consider targeted, age-appropriate education that addresses the specific challenges teens may face, including the risks associated with alcohol, other drugs, and peer influence.

Communicating firearms safety

- Te Tari Pūreke's communication resources, such as posters and flyers, are practical and relevant, especially for older individuals and those less engaged with social media. However, both licence holders and non-licence holders reported limited exposure to these resources, with many licence holders not recalling recent emails about important changes.
- Effective communication is crucial for supporting firearms licensing, registration, and use. Participants agreed that clear communication underpins compliance and responsible ownership. Without clear knowledge of the regulator and its services, individuals may be less likely to engage with appropriate channels for guidance and support.

The role of Te Tari Pūreke

- Awareness of Te Tari Pūreke varies among licence and non-licence holders. Licence holders generally recognise the regulatory authority but often lack clarity about its identity and functions. Non-licence holders have lower awareness. This lack of understanding can lead to uncertainty about where to seek assistance for firearms-related matters.
- Views on the relationship between Te Tari Pūreke and Police are mixed, with some favouring a standalone entity for trust reasons and others concerned about the costs and implications of separate entities. Addressing people's concerns about trust, cost, and information sharing will be critical to maintaining confidence in the regulatory system, regardless of whether Te Tari Pūreke operates within Police or as a standalone entity.

The impact of cost-of-living pressures on licensing

- Both licence holders and non-licence holders acknowledge that cost-of-living pressures are impacting household finances. While licensing costs are generally seen as reasonable, their affordability varies based on individual and whānau financial situations. For some households, especially those in higher-deprivation and isolated areas, licensing costs can be challenging, particularly when multiple family members need licences.
- Although licensing costs are not widely viewed as prohibitive, broader cost-of-living pressures, such as rising ammunition costs, are affecting firearms use. Licence holders also consider the value of owning and using firearms, with hunters noting the cost benefits of obtaining meat compared to purchasing it.

Firearms in everyday life

Rural communities in New Zealand have a strong tradition of firearms use and take pride in responsible ownership and use.

Firearms are integral to rural life, with licence holders on farms and lifestyle blocks in both North and South Islands using them for a range of practical purposes, including pest control, euthanising sick or injured animals, hunting, and sport. Partners, spouses, and children also play a significant role and participate in practical tasks, such as butchering and packing meat.

Privacy and disclosure concerns.

Licence holders and whānau prefer to keep their firearms ownership and use private to avoid becoming targets for theft and home invasion. Additionally, there is a stigma associated with firearms, particularly due to the Christchurch Mosque attacks and gun violence in the US and across the globe, and due to tensions in communities around the firearms buyback. This stigma is felt more acutely in urban areas, where licence holders often feel that the public does not understand the benefits of responsible firearms use, especially in relation to pest and habitat control.

- **Licence holders often do not wish to disclose their firearms ownership and use beyond their small, trusted circle of other firearms users.**

They believe that Te Tari Pūreke could play a role in communicating these benefits to communities while balancing the harmful actions associated with firearms.

I don't tell anyone I have a firearm and keep it quiet, so people don't break in. (Licence holder)

It's not something we talk about. You don't say I am going hunting with my 'such and such gun'. I don't talk to people outside my circle. I am worried about the bias around the confiscation. (Licence holder)

The 'unregulated' are involved.

Te Tari Pūreke regulates firearms licence holders and other relevant individuals and entities. However, in rural communities and service towns, many non-licence holders have close associations with firearms and often have practical experience through work, family, or community connections. This is less so in urban areas where friends, work colleagues and neighbours have less association with firearms.

Although these individuals are not formally regulated, they remain within the "circle of need" for safety information, guidance, and support. This contrasts with more urban

areas, where many non-licence holders tend to have less direct experience or association with firearms.

Many non-licence holders in rural communities and service towns have used firearms for target practice or hunting when they were young and have eaten the meat of hunted game animals. They often live near shops and signage that reinforce hunting, close to hills and mountain ranges where hunting occurs, and near clubs and shooting ranges. Additionally, many have family and friends who are licence holders.

Because these groups are outside the direct regulatory target, they can miss critical messages, training, and support. This leaves gaps in awareness and knowledge, and therefore their ability to positively impact the safety system. Such gaps can limit the regulator's overall impact.

- **Expanding communication and engagement strategies to reach non-licence holders presents an opportunity.**

By including these groups in awareness campaigns, partnerships, and educational initiatives, Te Tari Pūreke can enhance safety outcomes, reinforce a culture of compliance, and reduce risks across rural communities.

Licence holders and their whānau frequently contextualised firearms safety within broader community safety concerns.

Many noted that other issues, such as knife incidents on public transport and fatalities related to water safety, were perceived as presenting greater risks to public safety. As a result, firearms use was often viewed as familiar and relatively safe, particularly when compared to these more visible or high-profile harms.

- **This finding highlights the importance of clearly communicating the rationale for regulation, including the evidence base for addressing low-frequency but high-consequence risks.**

Perceptions and experiences of firearms licensing

Licensing is more rigorous than in the past.

There is broad agreement amongst licence and non-licence holders that firearms licensing is more rigorous than in the past. Many consider the process robust, safeguarded by detailed questioning and referee checks.

People trust that the system gives licences to suitable individuals, with effective controls in place to restrict access for those who could pose a public safety risk, including individuals who participate in criminal activity.

Mental health in rural communities is seen as a high priority in determining eligibility for a firearms licence, particularly due to the many stressors in rural communities, including financial, climate events, physical demands, and loneliness. At the same time, people noted concerns that mental health requirements may be perceived as stigmatising.

Despite a rigorous licensing process, there is a widespread perception that not all groups are held to the same standard. While law-abiding citizens comply with firearms licensing, many believe that gangs and criminals frequently evade the rules, undermining the intended safety benefits and feelings of unfairness among responsible licence holders.

- **There is an opportunity for Te Tari Pūreke to be clearer about how a robust regulatory system ensures the *right* people (those who are ‘fit and proper’) gain a firearms licence, and wider Police ‘s role is to pursue people who would possess and use firearms in criminal activities.**

Now that they've tightened up, it's made it harder for people who shouldn't have guns to get a gun licence. There is more paperwork and referee checks. You have to be a lot more dedicated now to get a gun licence. (Licence holder)

I am quite comfortable that it has been updated. I can remember when I was a kid, I'd hate to see the firearms regulations like it was then. When I was at secondary school, I used to take the 303 in a soft bag and put it under the seat of the school bus. (Licence holder)

I expect people to jump through hoops. It's not to do with fairness. It has to be rigorous. The process needs to be seen as secure and the person is legal to use a weapon and is in a good mental state. (Non-licence holder)

Challenges with refereeing.

Licence holders and non-licence holders generally consider the integrity of the licensing system to be supported using referees. However, many participants described practical and relational challenges with the referee process. Several women reported being asked to act as referees for spouses and partners who may be able to hear their conversations with vetters, which raised concerns about independence and comfort.

Some licence holders also spoke about the discomfort in asking non-related referees when they had not disclosed to them they were applying for a firearms licence.

While referees are viewed as an important safeguard, it came through that clearer guidance could help explain the purpose of referee checks, what is being asked of referees, and how independence and privacy are protected.

- **Providing clearer context and expectations around referees could strengthen confidence in the process, reduce discomfort, and support the integrity of the licensing system.**

Licensing is not accessible to all.

Licensing paperwork is often viewed as burdensome, and licence holders questioned whether the process could be made more efficient. While the licensing process is appropriately rigorous to ensure safety and responsibility, not all applicants have the necessary support to complete it successfully. As a result, some individuals who wish to obtain a licence may be unable to do so.

- **There is perhaps a potential role for experienced licence holders, either paid or volunteers, to support people in completing their firearms licence applications in a safe and supportive way.**

The licensing process is daunting to many whānau. It is making them feel like criminals by not making it accessible to them. People who have received little education don't know where to start. You need to build relationships with them, sit down with them and help them fill it out.

Peoples' lives and circumstances change throughout the licensing period.

Additionally, licensing captures a point-in-time status. Changes in personal and family circumstances, such as relationship breakups, having children, or changing addresses, can alter risks, licence holders' perceptions of heightened risks, and the system's ability to keep communities safe.

- **There is potential for Te Tari Pūreke to take a more proactive approach to mental health awareness and community-based support, ensuring that evolving life pressures and well-being challenges are considered within licensing and safety processes.**

Experiences shape perceptions of the licensing process.

The process of applying (and reapplying) for a firearms licence in New Zealand has undergone notable changes in recent years, with system improvements aimed at making licensing more accessible, efficient, and fair.

Recent applicants typically report a positive experience, as the requirements are straightforward, processing times are reasonable, staff are knowledgeable, and communication is prompt. This marks a significant improvement from the period following the 2019 Christchurch Mosque attacks and the disruptions caused by COVID-19 Alert Levels, which led to widespread frustration amongst applicants. Many who applied and reapplied during those years found the process slow, opaque, and stressful.

Te Tari Pūreke assumes that all licence holders are aware of these improvements. Those who navigated the licensing process during its most challenging phase may hold outdated impressions. With firearms licences valid for ten years, some individuals will likely continue to harbour the frustrations of the past until they next interact with the system. They may also pass outdated information to other licence holders.

- **An opportunity lies in bridging this gap by clearly communicating recent success stories and highlighting the accessibility, fairness, and effectiveness of the current process, Te Tari Pūreke can reassure former applicants and encourage new applications.**

It's more updated and a lot more safety is involved. It's quite good to go through all that step by step, to be like, is what I am doing correct? Am I following all the safety things? It's quite straightforward (Licence holder who went through licencing recently)

It was through COVID-19, it took me from six months prior to my gun licence expiring to three years to get my new gun licence. It took ages and it was a long process. There were three months when neither my partner or I had a gun licence. (Licence holder who went through licensing approximately four years ago)

Perceptions and experiences regarding the Firearms Registry

Licence holders generally believe that the Firearms Registry contributes to a safer environment, helping ensure that firearms are tracked and managed appropriately and do not fall into the wrong hands. The Registry also provides licence holders with greater confidence when buying and selling firearms.

Uneven burden of compliance.

As in firearms licensing, a key tension emerges around the perceived uneven burden of compliance with firearm registration. While law-abiding licence holders comply with firearms licensing and the Firearms Registry, there is a widespread belief that gangs and criminals do not, leading to feelings of frustration and unfairness among responsible licence holders. Many believe that those who pose the greatest risk of harm frequently evade the rules altogether, undermining the intended safety benefits of firearms licensing and the Firearms Registry.

- **To strengthen public confidence that the rules apply equally to everyone, there is an opportunity to enhance visible enforcement and communication. This could include sharing case studies of enforcement action, publishing inspection and compliance data, closing genuine process gaps, and further engaging communities in reporting suspected breaches.**

Concerns about data security.

There is anxiety about the potential consequences of being associated with firearms, such as fears of personal data breaches by Te Tari Pūreke that could expose licence holders to targeted crime. These concerns are exacerbated by theft in rural areas and on lifestyle blocks, including vehicles, machinery, livestock, and firearms.

Mistrust also arises around firearms transactions. Responsible gun owners typically buy firearms only from reputable dealers to ensure safety and legitimacy. However, there is scepticism regarding the effectiveness of the Firearms Registry in capturing the trade of firearms amongst those operating outside the law. Young people also perceive further challenges, such as the possibility of creating firearms through 3D printing, and express less confidence in the effectiveness of the Firearms Registry.

It is easy to get illegal guns. There's not much that the Government can do. I'm not saying I know how to, but I know people who have got illegal guns illegally. How do you stop it? I've got a 3d printer at home. I could go home and print one. The gun would explode but it would go off. (Young person)

Building confidence in the Firearms Registry.

There is an opportunity to reframe the narrative around the Registry. Emphasising the benefits of registering firearms and addressing concerns about the consequences of gun registration will help build confidence in the process. Furthermore, some people remember the earlier Registry, and shared that the digital version today didn't feel controversial when they considered that similar firearms information had been collected in the past.

- **Better explaining the 'why' behind the Registry will help build understanding and trust.**

I agree with the Registry. I think it's a really good thing to know that when somebody walks out of a store, it is registered under them. So if anything does happen, then it links back to that person. (Licence holder)

My only worry with registering is if modern technology lets us down, and somehow the Register is cyber-attacked or spammed and sent to the wrong hands, then the baddies see that I have x guns in our house, and then I become a target. (Licence holder)

Firearms safety education and capability building

Firearms safety in rural households.

In many rural households in both North and South Islands, firearms are woven into the fabric of family life. Adults typically work to demystify guns early, introducing children to firearms safety as soon as they show an interest. Learning is tailored to each child's maturity and readiness, with a strong emphasis on safety rules and correct target identification. Parents and caregivers express confidence in their ability to store firearms and ammunition securely, demonstrating a belief that their practices are responsible and sufficient to protect their whānau and children.

However, not all individuals applying for a firearms licence enter the system with the same level of knowledge or practical experience. Many applicants, particularly those living in more urban areas, have not grown up on farms or had prior exposure to firearms use.

Challenges of firearm safety during adolescence.

While many children are well-taught at home and closely supervised around firearms e.g. learning safe handling, secure storage, and respect for firearms these safeguards can weaken as children enter adolescence. Teenagers are more likely to encounter situations involving alcohol, peer pressure, and a desire to impress or test boundaries, all of which can increase the likelihood of unsafe firearm behaviours.

- **To sustain firearm safety into adolescence, the regulator should consider targeted, age-appropriate education that addresses the specific challenges teens may face, including the risks associated with alcohol, other drugs and peer influence, is needed.**

Integrating practical firearm safety into school programmes can help maintain and strengthen the protective benefits established during childhood, equipping teens to navigate new situations responsibly.

- **There is strong support for schools-based programmes, especially amongst women (licence holders and non-licence holders).**

I don't really think you should be drinking and operating a firearm. Drunk people make stupid mistakes. The odd time I've been drunk with mates and we shot BB guns at each other, but nothing more than that. Shooting each other with BB guns is perfectly fine if you have a clear head and know what you're

doing. If you're absolutely pissed that shouldn't be something you're doing. (Young person)

Knowledge gaps among new firearms users.

Not all individuals applying for a firearms licence enter the system with the same level of knowledge or practical experience. Many applicants, particularly those living in urban areas have not grown up on farms or had prior exposure to firearms use. As a result, new licence applicants and first-time firearms owners often expressed a strong desire to learn more about responsible firearms use and to access practical, hands-on knowledge from more experienced firearms owners.

At the same time, experienced firearms owners described a willingness to support new and prospective licence holders through informal mentoring, advice, and hands-on guidance. Several have already taught friends or family members, helping them build confidence and practical skills through direct experience.

- **Overall, the current cohort of licence applicants appears to have less informal or intergenerational exposure to firearms ownership and use than previous generations. This has created a learning gap for some new licence holders in accessing practical education and training, either before or alongside the formal licensing process.**

Te Tari Pūreke role in education and capability-building.

The above findings have implications for the regulator's role in education and system stewardship. People identified opportunities for the regulator to provide clearer information about where applicants can access training and mentoring, and to integrate educational guidance into the licensing process better.

- **Early access to quality training or mentorship was seen as particularly important, as it helps establish safe and responsible practices from the outset and supports long-term compliance.**

The training wasn't practical or helpful by any stretch of the imagination. Lots of people get a licence but have no confidence holding and firing a .22. (Licence holder)

If you have never used a gun, it would be great to get practical hands-on training when you get a licence. I learnt by trial and error. I didn't hit my toe, but it just about took my hat off when I went hunting. (Licence holder)

Communicating firearms safety

Relevance of communication resources.

Posters, flyers, and other printed resources produced by Te Tari Pūreke are considered practical and relevant, particularly for older people and those less engaged with social media. Some people took these materials home after the focus groups, indicating their perceived usefulness.

Despite generally positive feedback on the relevance of available resources, both licence holders and non-licence holders reported limited exposure to these resources. Many licence holders did not recall receiving recent emails about important changes, such as Registry requirements related to ammunition purchases.

- **Key safety and compliance messages are not consistently reaching their intended audiences, contributing to gaps in knowledge and understanding.**

Communication is a core regulatory function.

Clear and proactive communication is seen as central to Te Tari Pūreke role in supporting firearms licensing, registration, and use. Participants strongly agreed that effective communication underpins compliance and responsible property ownership, including storage, transportation, and use.

In addition to needing information when applying for and renewing their licences, licence holders also need information on firearms safety at key points in their lives, e.g., when travelling on an aircraft, when taking firearms overseas, when leaving or returning to a sport, and when they have had a health event.

Non-licence holders often need information when a family member who is a licence holder is unwell and dies.

- **Licence holders and non-licence holders view keeping people informed about regulatory requirements, system changes, and expectations as a core responsibility of Te Tari Pūreke.**

Explaining the "Why" behind the rules.

Licence holders also identified gaps in their understanding of the rationale behind some licensing rules, particularly those related to storage and transportation. They also questioned the rationale behind many of the questions in the licensing application, which contributed to their sense of burden.

- **This suggests an opportunity for Te Tari Pūreke to strengthen compliance by clearly explaining why certain rules exist, the reasons for the information sought through the licensing process and how they contribute to safety and responsible use within the regulatory system.**

Opportunity to strengthen communication channels.

There is a clear opportunity for Te Tari Pūreke to diversify and better coordinate its communication approach. Participants suggested that combining traditional methods (such as letterbox drops and printed materials) with targeted digital campaigns on platforms used by younger audiences would improve reach and effectiveness.

In rural communities, participants noted that trusted local channels and letterbox drops remain important ways to reach people.

- **From discussions, it became apparent that a mixed-channel approach would help ensure that different community groups, regardless of age or preferred communication method, remain informed and engaged.**

Participants supported Te Tari Pūreke current use of email for essential communications, such as relicensing reminders, and expressed interest in receiving more proactive updates about rule or process changes. However, they emphasised that communications should be relevant, clearly explained, and not overly frequent. Many preferred structured, predictable updates, such as a quarterly or six-monthly newsletter, rather than ad hoc messages that risk being perceived as "spam."

- **Direct email, using contact details provided during the licensing process, was identified as the preferred communication channel by licence holders.**

However, it should be noted that these formats will likely be less effective for younger people, who are more likely to seek information through digital platforms such as Instagram and TikTok.

Awareness and knowledge of Te Tari Pūreke

Awareness and knowledge of Te Tari Pūreke varied across licence and non-licence holders.

While licence holders generally recognise the existence of a regulatory authority, their understanding often lacks clarity regarding the regulator's identity, specific functions, or available resources. This is particularly true for those who have recently had direct contact with the regulator.

Licence holders who have applied (or reapplied) for a licence recently tend to be aware of Te Tari Pūreke by name. However, they remain unaware of its broader responsibilities, such as providing information and education.

Licence holders who have not applied for a firearms licence or provided information for the Firearms Registry recently believe that the Police, particularly local Police stations, are responsible for licensing, the Registry, and public safety. Some also mistakenly think that other organisations, such as the Department of Conservation and Fish & Game New Zealand, oversee legitimate firearm use, possession, and public safety.

Non-licence holders exhibit even lower levels of awareness and knowledge of Te Tari Pūreke. Older individuals within this group tend to possess a vague understanding that an organisation is tasked with firearm oversight, yet they are unaware of its name. Younger non-licence holders, meanwhile, may lack any awareness that such an organisation exists at all.

This lack of understanding among both licence holders and non-licence holders about Te Tari Pūreke and its regulatory function can lead to uncertainty about where to seek assistance for matters such as firearms licensing or registration, or for questions (e.g. what to do with a deceased family member's firearms).

- **The focus groups responses suggest that without clear knowledge of the regulator and its services, individuals may be less likely to engage with appropriate channels for guidance and support.**

(Firearms Safety Authority?) It could be a hunting and fishing organisation and Police all combined. I don't really know. I'm just thinking maybe Fish and Game are part of it. It's all part of their field that they are integrated with. (Licence holder who hasn't renewed their licence recently)

Views on the relationship between Te Tari Pūreke and Police are mixed.

When licence and non-licence holders were presented with information on the relationship between Te Tari Pūreke and Police they expressed mixed views about whether Te Tari Pūreke should sit within the Police or operate as a standalone entity. At an initial level, many reported little concern about Te Tari Pūreke reporting lines or its position as a Police business unit. Organisational placement was not seen as an issue until they were prompted to reflect.

Views were divided on whether Te Tari Pūreke as a standalone entity would be beneficial. Some participants feel that a standalone entity will be more trusted, encouraging people with firearms in their possession and who have less trust in Police to obtain a firearms licence and register firearms. They believe that the absence of Police involvement in home visits could alleviate concerns which may deter some people from complying.

On the other hand, some licence and non-licence holders raised concerns about the siloing of organisations, the potential cost implications of separating Te Tari Pūreke from Police and questioned whether such a structural change was driven by findings from the Royal Commission Royal Commission of Inquiry into the terrorist attack on Christchurch masjidain on 15 March 2019.

Once participants understood the nature of information sharing between Te Tari Pūreke and Police, they view the relationship positively. They felt that information transfer added robustness to the system and supported confidence that licence holders were assessed as fit and proper individuals. In this sense, the relationship with Police was seen as strengthening regulatory integrity rather than undermining it.

Across discussions, there was limited understanding of how government agencies operate, including the respective roles of departments, ministries, and Ministers. This lack of clarity contributed to uncertainty and mixed perceptions about governance arrangements.

- **Overall, these findings highlight the importance of clear communication about the role, identity, and governance arrangements of Te Tari Pūreke.**
- **Addressing peoples' concerns about trust, cost, and information sharing will be critical to maintaining confidence in the regulatory system, regardless of whether Te Tari Pūreke operates within Police or a standalone entity.**

The impact of external factors on licensing and firearms behaviours

Impact of cost-of-living pressures on licensing.

Licence holders and non-licence holders widely acknowledge that cost-of-living pressures are affecting household finances. Overall, licensing costs are generally regarded as reasonable, particularly when considered in relation to the length of the licence, comparisons with other regulatory costs (such as driver licensing), and the role of the regulator in administering and maintaining the licensing system.

However, people also emphasise that the affordability of licensing costs is relative to individual and whānau financial circumstances. For some households, particularly those in higher-deprivation and isolated areas, the cost of licensing can present a challenge. This is more pronounced in situations where many whānau members are required to obtain licences, increasing the financial burden for whānau.

While licensing costs themselves are not widely viewed as prohibitive, broader cost-of-living pressures are influencing firearms use. Rising ammunition costs may mean people think twice about using a firearm, particularly for activities such as pest control and target shooting.

Licence holders also frame licensing costs within the broader perceived value of owning and using firearms. For example, those who use firearms for hunting note the cost benefits of obtaining meat relative to buying it from a supermarket.

- **Licensing costs are typically considered within the broader financial context of owning and using a firearm, rather than as an independent barrier.**

Research approach

This project used a qualitative approach to explore perceptions, experiences, and concerns related to firearms safety and licensing in Ashburton, Auckland, Palmerston North, and surrounding rural areas.

Focus groups

Four focus groups were conducted in Ashburton in July 2025, with a further two focus groups conducted in Auckland and two in Palmerston North in late November 2025.

The Auckland and Palmerston North focus groups were undertaken as an extension to the initial Ashburton fieldwork, to incorporate urban and North Island perspectives. Findings from all focus groups are integrated and reported together.

A total of 31 participants participated in the research.

Group	Participants (type/number)	Location	Date
1	Rural women living in households with firearms (4)	Ashburton	15 July 2025
2	Parents and caregivers living in households without firearms (4)	Ashburton	15 July 2025
3	Rural licence holders (4)	Ashburton	16 July 2025
4	Young adults (mix of those living in households with and without firearms) (4)	Ashburton	16 July 2025
5	Older male licence holders aged 65 plus, including men who have renewed their licence in the last four years (2) and those who renewed over 4 years ago (1)	Auckland	25 November 2025
6	Men and women living in households with firearms who are not license holders (4)	Auckland	25 November 2025
7	Licence holders aged under 65, including men and women who have renewed their licence in the last four years (2) and those who renewed over 4 years ago (2)	Palmerston North	26 November 2025
8	Women in households with firearms who are not license holders (4)	Palmerston North	26 November 2025

Discussion topics

Each group was guided by a semi-structured discussion guide aligned with the research questions:

- Perceptions of firearms in everyday life.
- Safety concerns associated with firearms and firearms ownership.
- Experiences of the firearms licensing process.
- Perceptions of Te Tari Pūreke.

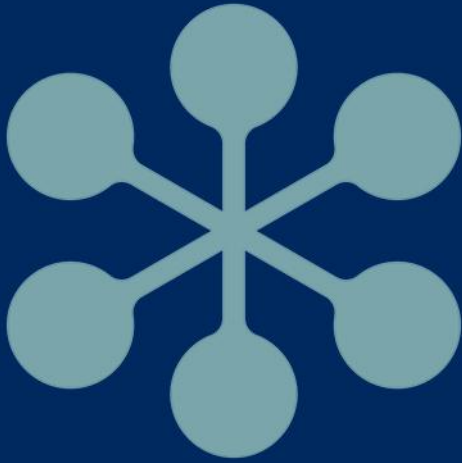
Auckland and Palmerston North groups also explored two further issues 1: whether the cost of living is influencing licensing decisions and 2) their perceptions of Te Tari Pūreke Firearms Safety Authority independence and reporting lines (relative to Police).

Data collection and analysis

Groups were moderated by experienced facilitators Sandar Duckworth and Liz Smith. An official from Te Tari Pūreke attended the focus groups in an observer capacity.

Sessions were audio-recorded (with participant consent) and transcribed for accuracy. Transcripts were coded thematically using the research questions as a framework, while allowing new themes to emerge. Findings were synthesised to identify patterns, points of consensus, and areas of divergence across the groups.

Please note: Findings are illustrative rather than statistically representative. Insights reflect the views of the participants involved and may not capture the full diversity of experiences across all rural communities.



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