

Research Briefing

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By Grahame Allen,  
Helena Carthew,  
Yago Zayed

# Knife crime statistics: England and Wales



## Summary

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- 4 Convictions for knife offences
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Bin the blade results by Greater Manchester Police.

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## Summary

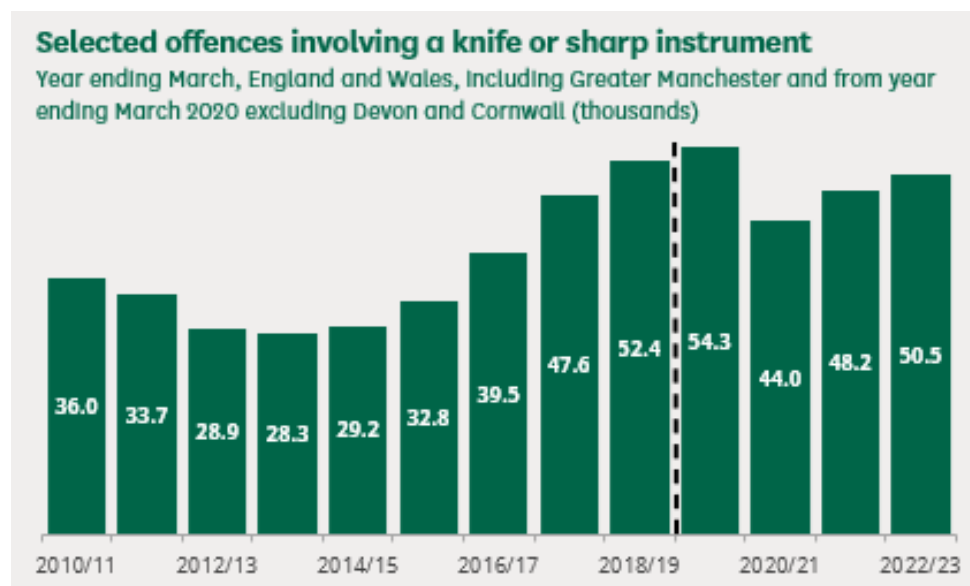
The briefing paper presents and analyses statistics on knife crime in England and Wales.

Knife crime is a crime involving an object with a blade or sharp instrument.

### Offences involving a knife

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) publishes data on crimes recorded by police involving a knife or sharp instrument for a selection of serious violent offences.

In the year ending March 2023, there were around 50,500 offences involving a sharp instrument in England and Wales (excluding Devon & Cornwall). This was 4.7% higher than in 2021/22 but 7% lower than in 2019/20.



Source: ONS, [Crime in England and Wales: Other related tables](#), Table F3a, 20 July 2023 (accessed 11 October 2023).

### Homicide offences

In the year ending March 2022, Home Office data shows there were [261 homicides \(currently recorded\) using a sharp instrument](#), including knives and broken bottles. This meant sharp instruments were used in 40% of the 594 homicides that occurred in 2021/22.

## Knife crime by police force area

ONS data shows that in 2022/23, [West Midlands Police recorded the highest rate of 178 offences per 100,000 population](#). In contrast, the North Yorkshire recorded the lowest rate of 35 offences each, per 100,000 population.

## Proven offences and offenders

Sentencing statistics from the Ministry of Justice shows that in the year ending March 2023, there were [just over 19,000 cautions and convictions made for possession of a knife or offensive weapon](#). Juveniles (aged 10-17) were the offenders in around 18% of cases.

## Hospital admissions

Police and courts crime data depends on offences being reported to the authorities, which is a weakness. To get a more rounded view on knife crime it is useful to supplement this information with alternative sources such as NHS hospital data.

Data from NHS Digital shows there were [3,775 “hospital episodes” recorded in English hospitals in 2022/23](#) due to assault by a sharp object. This was a 9.5% decrease compared to 2021/22, and a 3.6% increase compared to 2014/15.

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Offences relating to knife crime

The Crown Prosecution Service legal guidance [Offensive Weapons, Knives, Bladed and Pointed Articles](#) discusses the legislation governing the carrying (possession) and sale of knives and other offensive weapons. The main possession offences are as follows:

- It is an offence under Section 1 of the [Prevention of Crime Act 1953](#) for a person to have “with him in a public place any offensive weapon without lawful authority or reasonable excuse”.
- Under Section 139 of the [Criminal Justice Act 1988](#) it is an offence for a person to have “with him in a public place... any article which has a blade or is sharply pointed”, except a folding pocketknife with a cutting edge of three inches or less, without good reason or lawful authority.
- Under Section 139A of the Criminal Justice Act 1988, it is an offence for a person to have an offensive weapon or a bladed or pointed article on school premises without good reason or lawful authority.
- Under section 1(1A) of the [Restriction of Offensive Weapons Act 1959](#) it is an offence to possess flick knives or gravity knives
- Under section 141(1A) of the Criminal Justice Act 1988 it is an offence to possess in private any of the prohibited offensive weapons listed in the Schedule to the [Criminal Justice Act 1988 \(Offensive Weapons\) \(Amendment\) Order 2016/803](#)

## 1.2 Sentencing for knife crimes

The above offences are all “either way” offences, meaning they can be tried in either the magistrates’ court or the Crown court depending on the seriousness of the offence.

The sentence imposed on those convicted of possession offences range from community orders to four years in custody, depending on the level of culpability, risk of harm and other factors.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Sentencing Council, [Bladed articles and offensive weapons - possession](#)

## 2

## Police recorded crime data

With the exception of homicide offences, statistics on police recorded crime did not separately identify crimes involving knives until 2007/08.

From April 2007, data on the number of offences involving a knife or sharp instrument has been collected for a selection of serious violent offences (viewed as those most likely to involve the use of knives). This group, known as “selected offences” is comprised of: homicide, attempted murder; wounding with intent to do grievous bodily harm (GBH); wounding or inflicting grievous bodily harm (i.e. without intent); robbery of business property and robbery of personal property. From April 2008 the list was expanded to include other violent and sexual offences such as threats to kill, actual bodily harm, rape and sexual assaults.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) publishes comparable data back to 2010/11.<sup>2</sup>

### Box 1: How to interpret the data

1. The ONS has suggested some of the recent increases in police recorded crime in general are due to recording improvements among police forces.

Care should be taken when comparing data on knife crime for the Greater Manchester Police (GMP) Force Area. The ONS has said:

A review identified undercounting of crimes involving a knife or sharp instrument [...] Data from December 2017 onwards have been revised. Previous data have not been revised and are likely to exclude relevant crimes.

2. Following the implementation of a new IT system, Devon and Cornwall Police have been unable to provide data on knife crime. In this briefing, data for England and Wales is mainly presented excluding GMP and Devon & Cornwall Police.

3. The Covid-19 pandemic had a significant impact on patterns of crime. There was a large decrease in the number of offences involving knives or sharp instruments during periods which coincide with national lockdowns and the highest level of restrictions.

<sup>2</sup> The [Focus on violent crime and sexual offences](#) publication includes data on offences involving a knife or sharp instrument going back to the year ending March 2009. This excludes data for West Midlands and Sussex, due to inconsistencies in their recording practices until March 2011 (source: ONS, Crime in England and Wales, [Police Recorded Crime](#), 25 January 2018, footnote 4).

Sources: ONS, [Crime in England and Wales: year ending March 2019](#), 18 July 2019; ONS [Crime in England and Wales: year ending March 2021](#), 22 July 2021

Police forces have been involved implementing a new cross-police force methodology for counting offences involving knives or sharp instruments. This is done using a tool called the National Data Quality Improvement Service (NDQIS).

An adjustment has been made to data before April 2019 for the police forces who are now using the NDQIS tool and the total for England and Wales. As more forces have switched to the NDQIS tool, historical data for these forces and for England and Wales will continue to be updated.<sup>3</sup>

Currently 40 police forces have switched to the National Data Quality Improvement Service (NDQIS) data collection method. Three police forces and the British Transport Police are still submitting knife offences data through the special collection (Staffordshire, West Mercia, and Gloucestershire).<sup>4</sup> Data should not be compared across all police forces because of the changes in data collection methods.

## 2.1

### Trends over time

In 2022/23 there were around 50,500 offences involving a sharp instrument in England and Wales (excluding Devon & Cornwall). This was 4.7% higher than in 2021/22 but 7% lower than in 2019/20.

The chart below shows that the number of selected offences involving a knife or sharp object fell between 2010/11 and 2013/14 before rising over the next five years. This chart includes data from Greater Manchester Police Force but excludes Devon & Cornwall from 2019/20 – see box 1 above for more information on this.

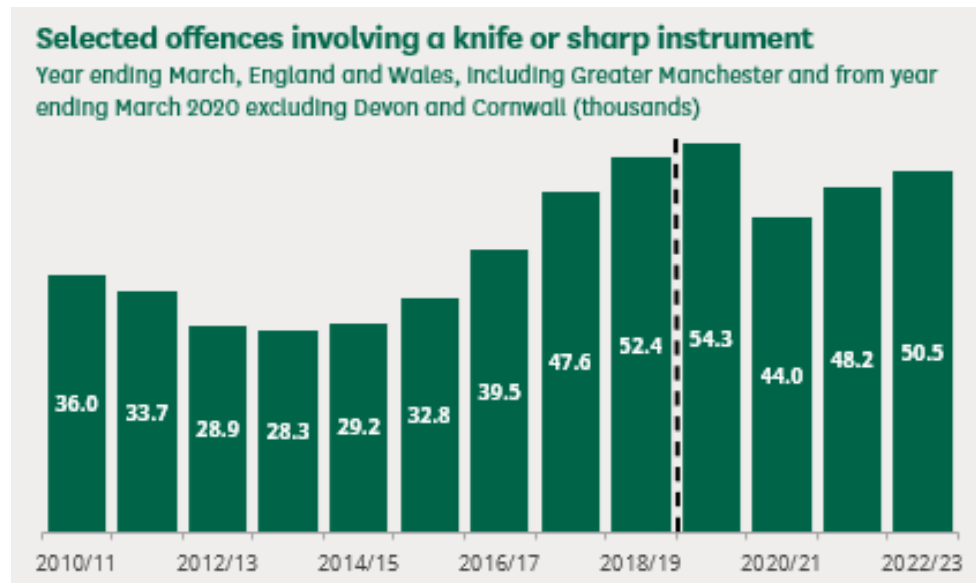
Since 2019/20, the total number of selected offences involving a knife or sharp instrument (including Greater Manchester but excluding Devon and Cornwall) has fallen by 7% (from around 54,300 to 50,500). The main offences involving a knife or sharp instrument recorded in 2022/23 were assault with injury and intent to cause serious harm (48.4%) and robbery (41.5%).

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<sup>3</sup> ONS, [Police recorded offences involving knives or sharp instruments: methodology changes](#), 13 May 2021

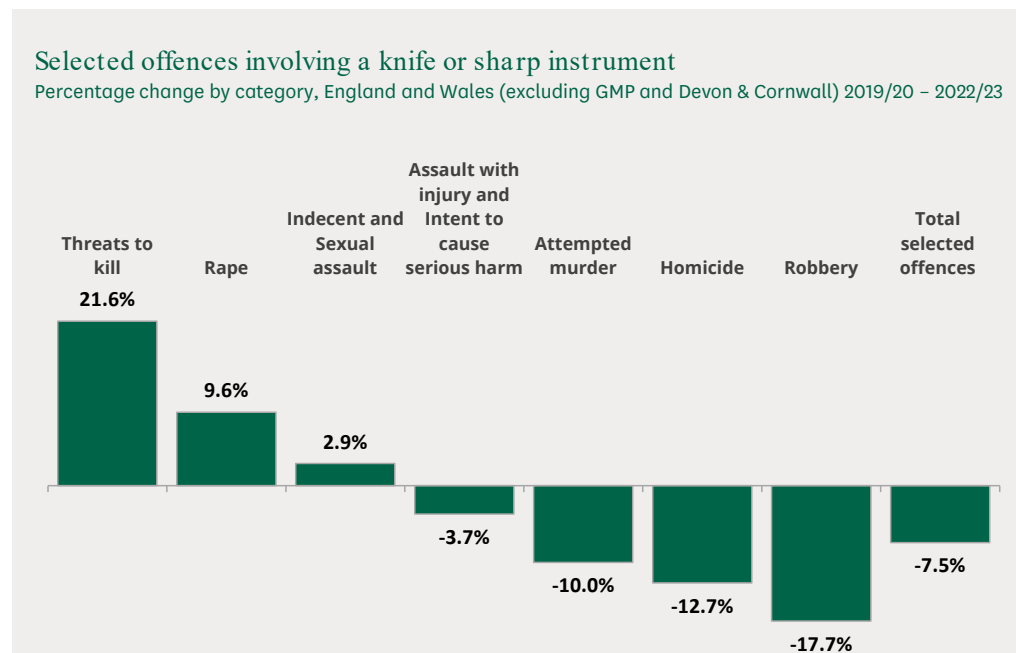
<sup>4</sup> ONS, [Crime in England and Wales: year ending March 2023](#), 20 July 2023





Source: ONS, [Crime in England and Wales: Other related tables](#), Table F3a, 20 July 2023 (accessed 11 October 2023).

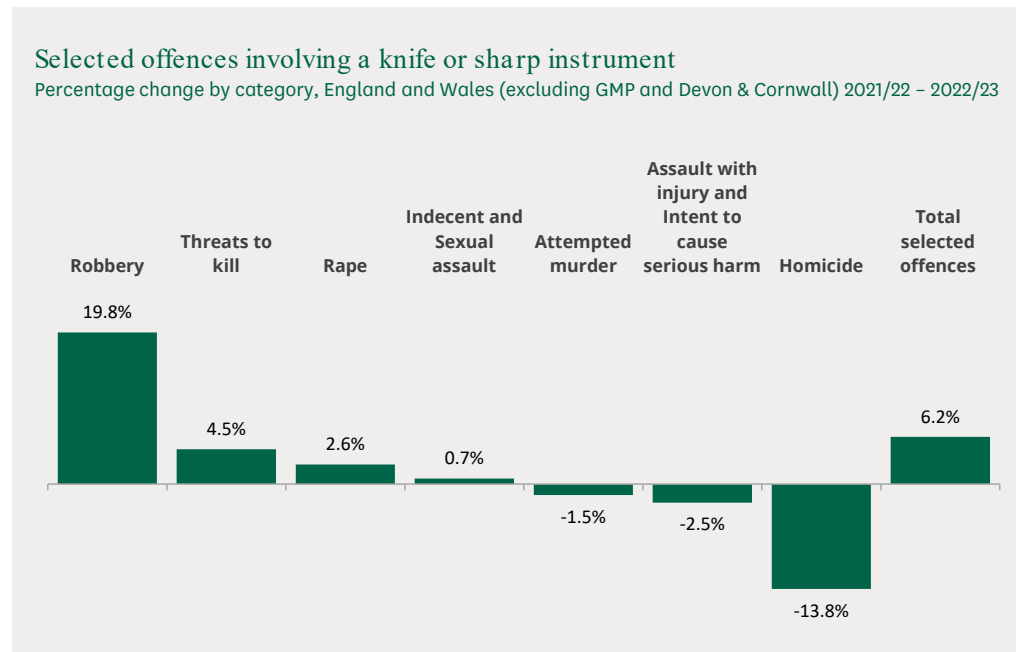
The next chart shows the percentage increase in the threats to kill category of offences since 2019/20 was the highest, increasing by 22% over the period. The category that saw the largest percentage decrease over the period was robbery, falling by 18%. This data excludes Greater Manchester and Devon & Cornwall.



Source: ONS, [Crime in England and Wales: Other related tables](#), Table F3, 20 July 2023 (accessed 11 October 2023).

Data tables showing the number of offences involving knives or sharp instruments can be found in the accompanying downloadable data tables ([Table 1](#)).

The chart below shows the percentage change of each selected knife crime related offence category between 2021/22 and 2022/23. This data excludes Greater Manchester and Devon & Cornwall.



Source: ONS, [Crime in England and Wales: Other related tables](#), Table F3, 20 July 2023 (accessed 11 October 2023).

In the year to March 2023, the total number of offences involving a knife or sharp instrument (excluding Greater Manchester and Devon & Cornwall) increased by 6% (from 44,500 in 2021/22 to 47,300 in 2022/23).

Robbery involving a knife increased the most (20%), followed by threats to kill (4.5%) and rape (3%). Homicide was the offence category that showed the largest decrease (14%) in the twelve months to March 2023.

Care should be taken when comparing figures for rape, sexual assault, attempted murder and homicide offences over time due to the relatively low number of these offences recorded.

Further information on the number and proportion of selected violent and sexual offences involving a knife or sharp instrument recorded by the police can be found in the accompanying downloadable data tables ([Table 1](#)).

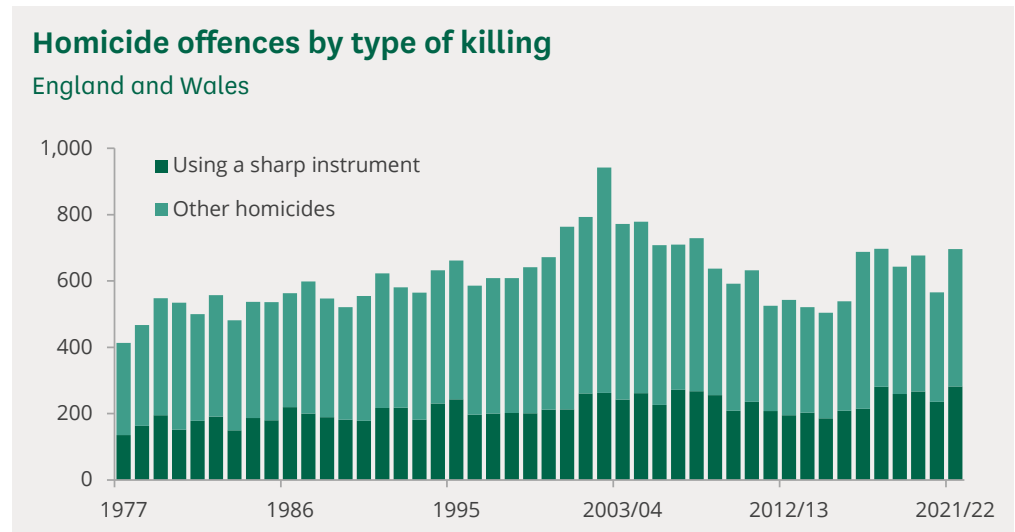
## 2.2

### Homicide

Data on homicides involving a sharp instrument has been collected by the Home Office since 1977 as part of the Homicide Index collection. The latest

data for the year ending March 2022 suggest there were 218 homicides involving a knife or sharp instrument.<sup>5</sup>

The chart below shows the total number of homicides and those committed using a sharp instrument in England and Wales (including Greater Manchester Police) in each year since 1977. Further data on homicides can be found in the accompanying data tables ([Table 2](#)).



Source: 1977 to 1994 - Provided by Home Office; 1995 to 2007 - Home Office, [Statistical Bulletin, Appendix table 2.03](#) and subsequent editions; 2007/08 onwards - ONS, [Homicide in England and Wales: Appendix tables](#), Table 8a, 9 February 2023 (accessed 11 October 2023) and earlier editions.

In 1977, there were 135 homicides involving a sharp instrument including knives and broken bottles. This accounted for 33% of all homicides. In 2021/22, there were 282 recorded homicides using a sharp instrument - the highest number of homicides using a sharp instrument recorded between 1977 and 2022. This accounted for 41% of all homicides. Over the last decade, 38% of homicides involved a sharp instrument.

The data shows that the most common method of homicide of both male and female victims was using a sharp instrument. This has been the case since 1977, when this data series begins. In 2021/22, 44% of homicides with a male victim involved a knife or sharp instrument, compared to 32% of female victims.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> ONS, [Homicide in England and Wales: Appendix tables](#), Table 8a, 9 February 2023 (accessed 11 October 2023)

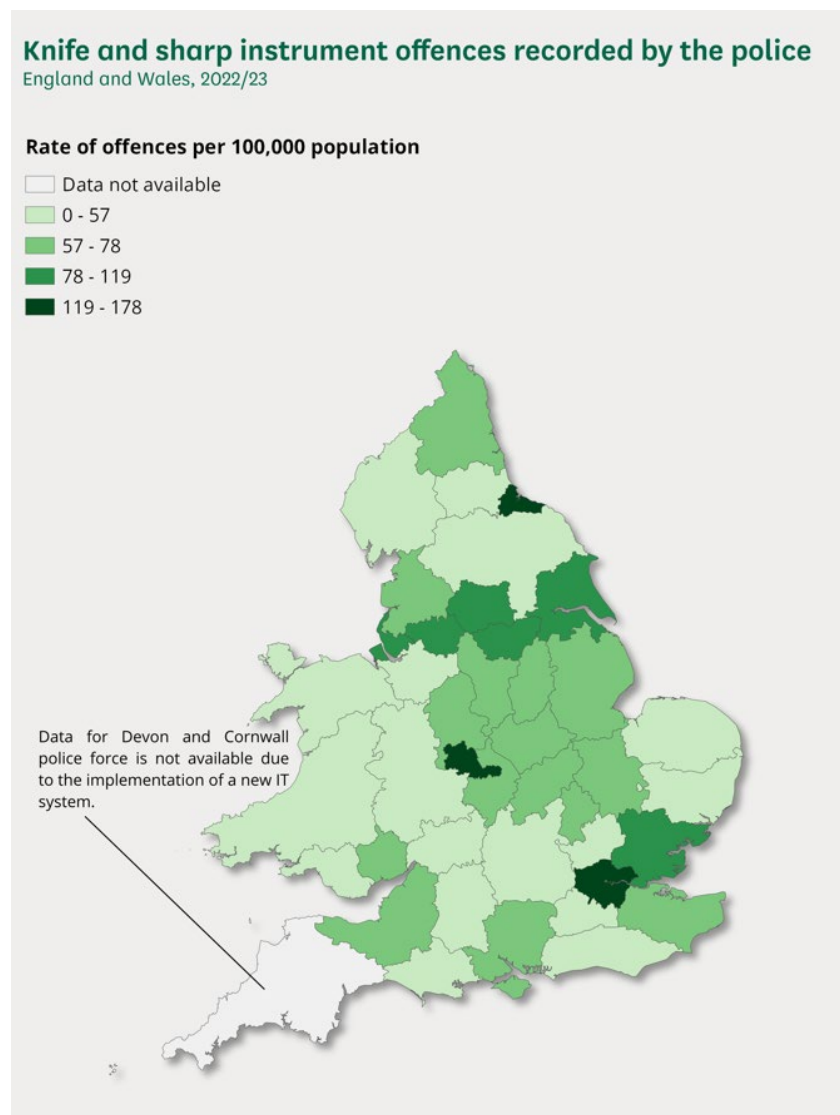
<sup>6</sup> ONS, [Homicide in England and Wales: Appendix tables](#), Table 8a, 9 February 2023 (accessed 11 October 2023)

## 2.3

# Knife crime by police force area

Currently 40 police forces have switched to the National Data Quality Improvement Service (NDQIS) data collection method. Three remaining police forces and the British Transport Police are still submitting knife or sharp instrument offences data through a special collection (Staffordshire, West Mercia, and Gloucestershire). Data should not be compared between all police forces because of the changes in data collection methods.

The associated downloadable [Table 3](#) show the data for 42 forces (excluding Devon & Cornwall from 2019/20). The charts and associated text (below) use data for 38 of the 43 territorial police forces. Data for Devon and Cornwall is not available, while the three police forces yet to switch to the new NDQIS data collection method - Staffordshire, West Mercia, and Gloucestershire - are also excluded as is data for the City of London due to its low residential population.



Source: ONS, [Crime in England and Wales: Police Force Area Data Tables](#), Table P3, 20 July 2023

Overall, urban forces tend to record higher levels of crime involving knives than more rural ones. In 2022/23, West Midlands Police recorded the highest rate of 178 offences per 100,000 population. In contrast, the North Yorkshire recorded the lowest rate of 35 offences per 100,000 population.

The data table ([Table 3](#)) accompanying this briefing show the number and rate per 100,000 population of selected offences involving a knife or sharp instrument for each police force area (excluding Devon & Cornwall from 2019/20). The table below provides a comparison of knife crime rates between forces that have moved to the new NDQIS data collection method:

<b>Rates of knife crime by police force area</b>					
Per 100,000 head of population, 2022/23					
<b>Top ten</b>			<b>Greatest % increase since 2021/22</b>		
Rank	Police force area	Rate per 100,000	Rank	Police force area	% change
1	West Midlands	178	1	Gwent	+31%
2	Cleveland	159	2	Dyfed-Powys	+27%
3	Metropolitan Police	145	3	Cleveland	+18%
4	South Yorkshire	119	4	West Midlands	+16%
5	Greater Manchester	111	5	Northumbria	+16%
6	West Yorkshire	98	6	Metropolitan Police	+16%
7	Merseyside	90	7	Suffolk	+15%
8	Essex	88	8	Durham	+14%
9	Humberside	88	9	Wiltshire	+14%
10	Leicestershire	78	10	Essex	+8%
<b>Bottom ten</b>			<b>Smallest % increase since 2021/22</b>		
Rank	Police force area	Rate per 100,000	Rank	Police force area	% change
29	South Wales	48	29	Cumbria	-6%
30	Cheshire	48	30	Hertfordshire	-6%
31	Norfolk	44	31	Northamptonshire	-9%
32	Dyfed-Powys	44	32	Norfolk	-9%
33	North Wales	44	33	North Yorkshire	-11%
34	Wiltshire	42	34	North Wales	-12%
35	Surrey	41	35	Greater Manchester	-13%
36	Cumbria	41	36	Bedfordshire	-13%
37	Dorset	40	37	Merseyside	-18%
38	North Yorkshire	35	38	Cambridgeshire	-20%

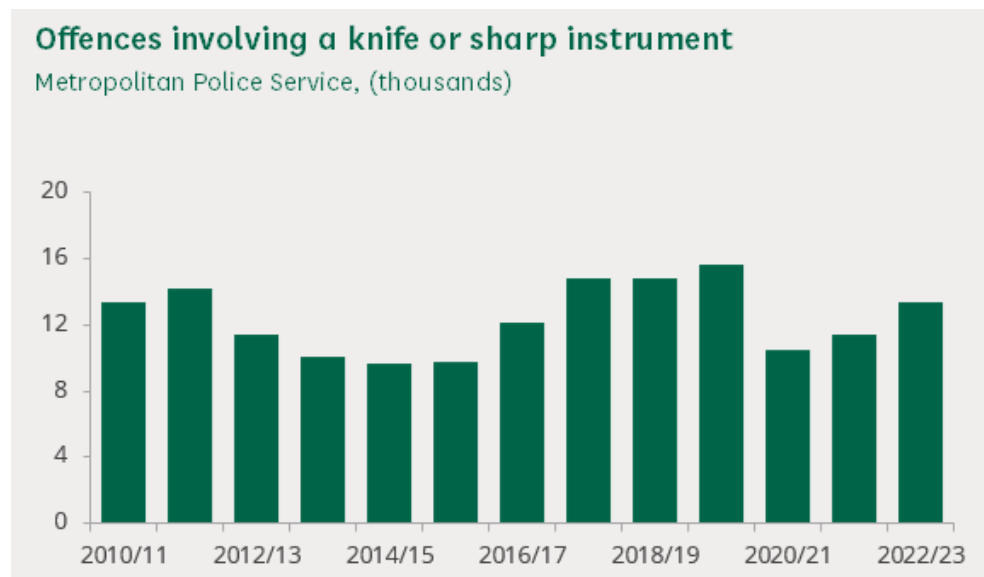
Source: ONS, [Crime in England and Wales: Police Force Area Data Tables](#), Table P3, 20 July 2023 and earlier editions

Between 2021/22 and 2022/23, Gwent experienced the largest percentage increase in selected knife and sharp instrument offences (31%) from 284 in 2021/22 to 372 in 2022/23.

Dyfed-Powys also had a large percentage increase (27%) from 180 offences in 2021/22 to 228 in 2022/23. Cambridgeshire recorded the largest decrease in offences (-20%) from 75 in 2021/22 to 60 in 2022/23.<sup>7</sup>

## 2.4 Knife crime in London

The number of crimes involving a knife or sharp instrument recorded by the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) is available from its [Crime statistics 2022/23](#) dashboard. Unlike the nation-wide data provided by the Home Office, MPS data is broken down by London borough.



Source: Metropolitan Police Service, [Crime statistics 2022/23](#), accessed: 11 October 2023 and earlier years dashboards; Data prior to 2017: London Assembly, [Metropolitan Police Service – Recorded Crime](#), 20 July 2017 (no longer available).

The chart above shows that the number of knife or sharp instrument crimes recorded by the MPS fell in each year from 2011/12 to 2015/16. It reached a peak of over 15,600 incidents in 2019/20. Following the pandemic, knife crime has risen in each year and 13,300 incidents were recorded in 2022/23. Knife crime with injury (a subset of knife crime) rose by 15% from roughly 4,100 offences in 2010/11 to 4,700 in 2017/18. It has since fallen to around 3,600 in 2022/23.

### Knife crime by borough

The table below shows the overall number and rate of knife crime offences by London borough for 2021/22 and 2022/23 ranked in terms of the rate per 100,000 head of population in 2022/23:

<sup>7</sup> Figures for London include Metropolitan Police Service and City of London

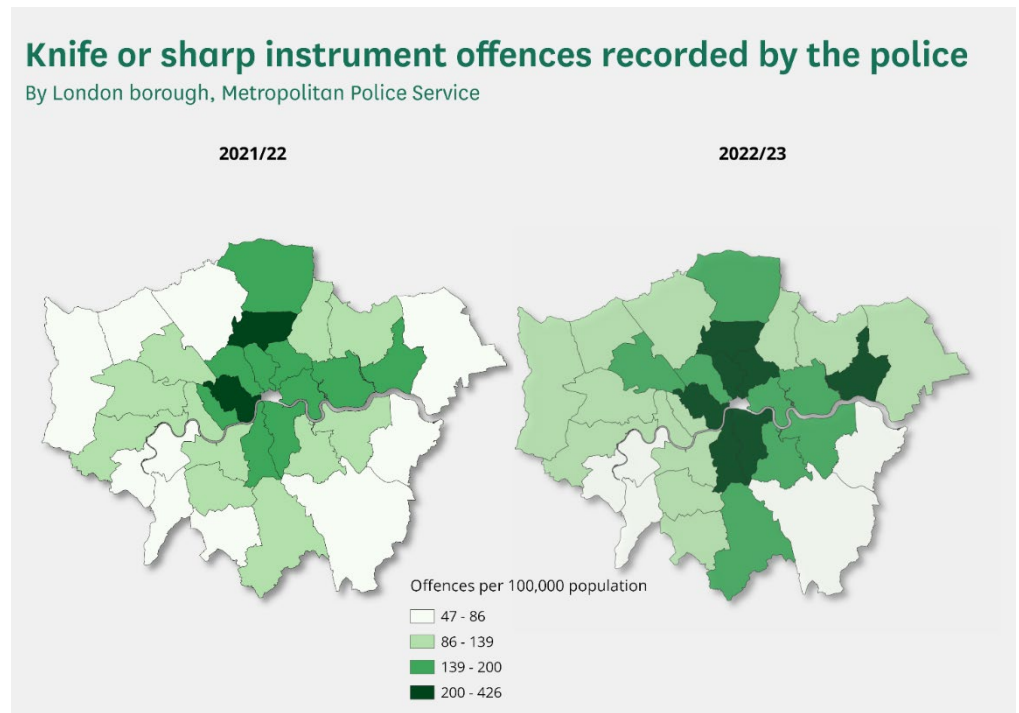
<b>Knife crime by London borough</b>						
Total number of incidents and rate per 100,000 head of population						
Borough	2021/22		2022/23		Percentage change	
	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate
Westminster	728	356	871	426	20%	20%
Southwark	536	174	737	240	38%	38%
Haringey	675	255	632	239	-6%	-6%
Lambeth	634	200	735	231	16%	16%
Barking & Dagenham	331	151	468	214	41%	42%
Islington	358	165	464	214	30%	30%
Hackney	502	194	546	211	9%	9%
Camden	356	169	387	184	9%	9%
Enfield	615	186	599	182	-3%	-2%
Newham	539	154	624	178	16%	16%
Tower Hamlets	527	170	547	176	4%	4%
Croydon	543	139	681	174	25%	25%
Brent	371	109	533	157	44%	44%
Lewisham	377	125	460	153	22%	22%
Greenwich	386	134	414	143	7%	7%
Kensington & Chelsea	211	147	187	130	-11%	-12%
Redbridge	320	103	390	126	22%	22%
Waltham Forest	358	129	351	126	-2%	-2%
Hammersmith & Fulham	208	114	228	124	10%	9%
Wandsworth	328	100	396	121	21%	21%
Ealing	403	110	436	119	8%	8%
Merton	205	95	256	119	25%	25%
Hounslow	263	91	324	112	23%	23%
Barnet	294	76	399	102	36%	34%
Sutton	180	86	207	99	15%	15%
Havering	177	68	255	97	44%	43%
Hillingdon	242	79	272	89	12%	13%
Harrow	175	67	229	88	31%	31%
Bromley	202	61	280	85	39%	39%
Bexley	174	71	203	82	17%	15%
Kingston upon Thames	97	58	102	61	5%	5%
Richmond upon Thames	92	47	110	56	20%	19%

Source: Metropolitan Police Service, [Crime statistics 2022/23](#), Accessed: 11 October 2023; ONS, [Population and household estimates, England and Wales](#), 2 November 2022

In 2022/23, the highest number of knife or sharp instrument offences in London was recorded in Westminster (871 offences or 426 per 100,000 head of population). The lowest number of offences was in in Richmond upon Thames (110 offences or 56 per 100,000 head of population).

The number of selected knife related offences in Kensington & Chelsea decreased from 211 in 2021/22 to 187 in 2022/23 (-11%). This was the highest proportional decrease over the period. The highest proportional increase of 44% was recorded in Havering (a rise from 177 offences in 2021/22 to 255 in 2022/23).

The map below provides a visual comparison of knife crime levels by London borough:



Source: Metropolitan Police Service, [Crime statistics 2022/23](#), accessed: 10 October 2023.



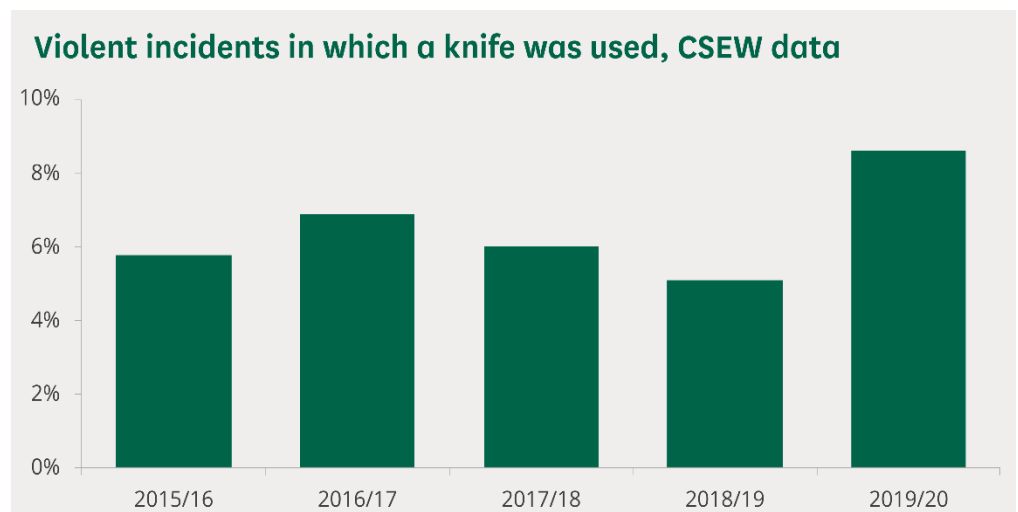
## 3

## Crime Survey of England and Wales data

The Crime Survey of England and Wales (CSEW) measures crime experienced by adults aged over 16 living in private households. The survey looks at personal experiences of crime and includes crimes which are not reported to the police. It is seen as an important complement to data on police-recorded crime.

The 2019/20 survey showed that knives were the most common type of weapon used, accounting for 9% of all violent incidents. This represents an increase of four percentage points on the year before. The chart below shows the trend in the proportion of violent incidents in which a knife was used based on CSEW data.<sup>8</sup>

Data from 2015/16 onwards is not comparable with previous years. The most recent overall data is from 2019/20: after that, the CSEW did not publish data on incidents where a knife was used. This is because the survey method for the CSEW changed from a face-to-face to a telephone survey.<sup>9</sup>



Note: data from 2015/16 onwards includes screwdrivers and other stabbing implements and is not comparable with previous years.

Source: ONS, [Nature of crime tables, violence, Table 4, 3 September 2020](#) and earlier editions.

<sup>8</sup> In a release published in January 2018, the ONS said: “As offences involving the use of weapons are relatively low in volume, the CSEW is not able to provide reliable trends for such incidents.” ONS, [Crime in England and Wales: Year Ending September 2017, 25 January 2018](#)

<sup>9</sup> ONS, [Update to comparability between the Telephone-operated Crime Survey for England and Wales and the face-to-face Crime Survey for England and Wales](#), 22 July 2021.

## 3.1

### Children and young people

From January 2009, the CSEW asked children aged 10 to 15 living in private households about their experience of crime in the previous 12 months.

In the year ending March 2018 (the most recent data available), 6.5% of 10–15-year-olds knew someone who carried a knife, as did a similar percentage (5.7%) of 16–29-year-olds. Less than 1% of respondents of both age groups said they carried a knife.<sup>10</sup>

Due to the small sample size, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) warns against making comparisons in the prevalence of knife-carrying using the CSEW. The ONS is moving towards a three-year sample to improve the reliability of the estimates. These estimates have not yet been published at the time of writing.

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<sup>10</sup> ONS, [The nature of violent crime: appendix tables](#), 7 February 2019, Table 9

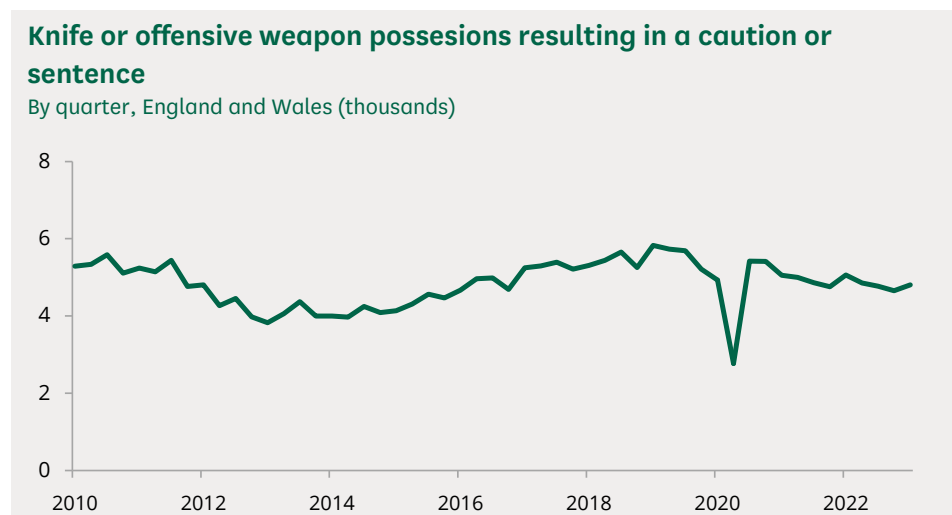
## 4

## Convictions for knife offences

Statistics showing the number of violent crime prosecutions involving a knife are not available because data on the circumstances of each offence are not collected centrally. Statistics are available for offences which specifically relate to knives or offensive weapons. Data is published on the number of convictions for possessing:

- an article with a blade or a point in a public place;
- an article with a blade or a point on school premises;
- offensive weapons without lawful authority or reasonable excuse;<sup>11</sup>
- offensive weapons without lawful authority or reasonable excuse on school premises.
- Together, these offences constitute knife and offensive weapon possession.

[Knife Crime Statistics Quarterly Brief](#) provides routinely published data on knife and offensive weapon possession. Taken from the Police National Computer (PNC), the data is provisional and subject to change as more information is recorded by the police.<sup>12</sup> The series shows the number of offences resulting in a caution or sentence. The chart below shows the quarterly trend since 2010:



Source: Ministry of Justice, [Knife and Offensive Weapon Sentencing Statistics: January to March 2023](#), 17 August 2023, Table 1.

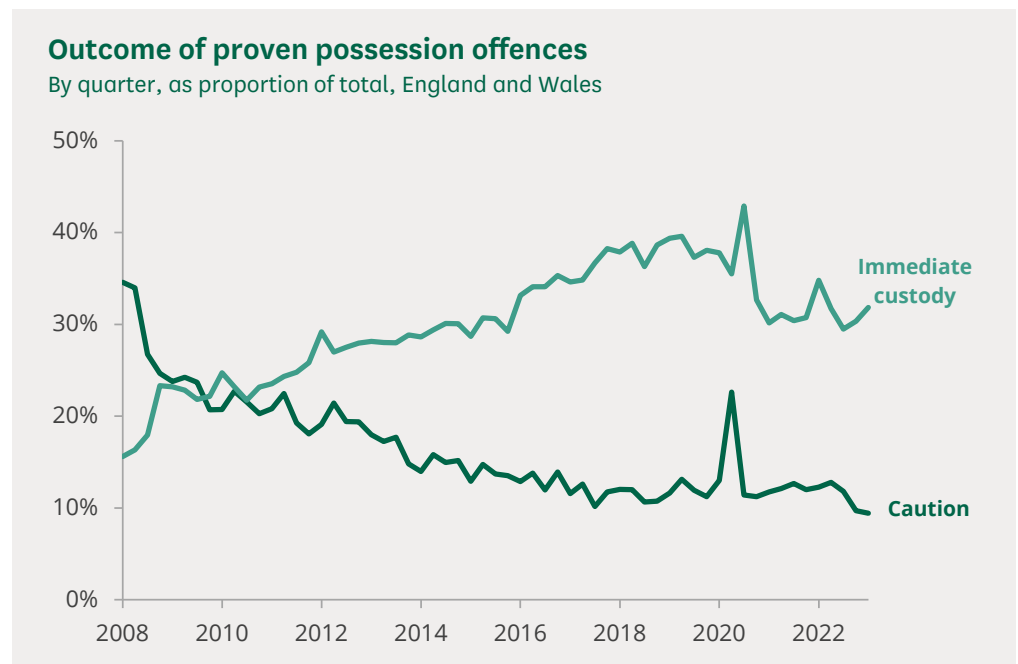
<sup>11</sup> Offensive weapons include sharp instruments and other dangerous weapons (excluding firearms).

<sup>12</sup> Police forces tend to record cautions more promptly on the PNC than court sentences. The latest caution figures are likely to be revised less than the sentencing figures.

The published tables show Q4 2007 onwards - this data from the PNC is available in the accompanying downloadable data [Table 5](#). As shown in the chart above, the number of proven possession offences fell from around 7,000 in Q1 2008 to 3,800 in Q1 2013. Since then, the number of proven offences increased to just under 5,800 in Q1 2019, before falling again over the next financial year to around 4,900 in Q1 2020.

The low figure in Q2 2020 was recorded during the first Covid-19 lockdown. The number of possession offences resulting in a caution or sentence returned to around 5,400 for the remaining two quarters of 2020 – a similar level to the previous three years. Since 2021, this number has decreased. In Q1 2023, there were 4,808 knife or offensive weapon possession offences recorded, 5% lower than the 5,038 in Q1 2021. Around 4,800 knife or offensive weapon possessions resulted in a caution or sentence in Q1 2023.<sup>13</sup>

The chart below shows that, since 2010, the proportion of offences resulting in a caution has fallen, while the proportion receiving a custodial sentence has increased:



Source: Ministry of Justice, [Knife and Offensive Weapon Sentencing Statistics: January to March 2023](#), 17 August 2023, Table 1

In response to the high prevalence of knife crime, a Court of Appeal judgment in May 2008 said magistrates should normally sentence those convicted of a knife crime possession offence at the top end of the range.<sup>14</sup> The effect of this judgement can be seen in the increased use of custody from Q3 2008. [The Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015](#) introduced provision for a minimum

<sup>13</sup> Figures for the most recent four quarters are estimates based on historical data changes. More information can be found in the [Technical guide to knife possession sentencing](#).

<sup>14</sup> [R v Povey \[2008\] EWCA Crim 1261](#)

custodial sentence (of six months for those aged 18 or over) for repeat offenders.

Between Q1 2010 and Q1 2018, the proportion of offenders receiving an immediate custodial sentence for possession of a knife or offensive weapon increased from 23% to 39%. This remained stable until falling in the latter half of 2020, and in Q1 2023, 30% of knife and offensive weapon possession offences resulted in an immediate custodial sentence. This decrease was due to the complications associated with the pandemic and a backlog of cases at the Crown Court which were still awaiting final decisions.<sup>15</sup>

There was an increase in the proportion of proven offences resulting in a caution or immediate custody in Q2 2020. In this period, the proportion of offences resulting in a community sentence or suspended sentence was lower than in previous years, resulting in the spike visible in the chart.

The latest data for year ending March 2023 shows there were 19,086 disposals given for possession of a knife or offensive weapon offences.<sup>16</sup> Of these:

- Juveniles (aged 10-17) were the offenders in 18% of cases;
- The juvenile custody rate was 7% and caution rate was 31%;<sup>17</sup>
- For adults the custody rate was 35% and caution rate was 7%;
- Juveniles received a community sentence in 56% of cases and adults 17%.

An alternative source of data for proven offences is the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) courts database which should be used when a longer time series is required. This source is not comparable with the data published in the [Knife Crime Statistics Quarterly Brief](#) as the MoJ data is based on the number of offenders while the PNC data looks at the number of offences.

The chart below shows the proportion of proven offenders sentenced for possession of knife offences has been increasing since 1995. Since 2007, there has been a steady fall in the proportion of proven offenders receiving a caution, from 36% to 11% in 2022. This is likely linked to the Court of Appeal judgement of May 2008.

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<sup>15</sup> Ministry of Justice, [Knife and Offensive Weapon Sentencing Statistics: January to March 2023](#), 17 August 2023

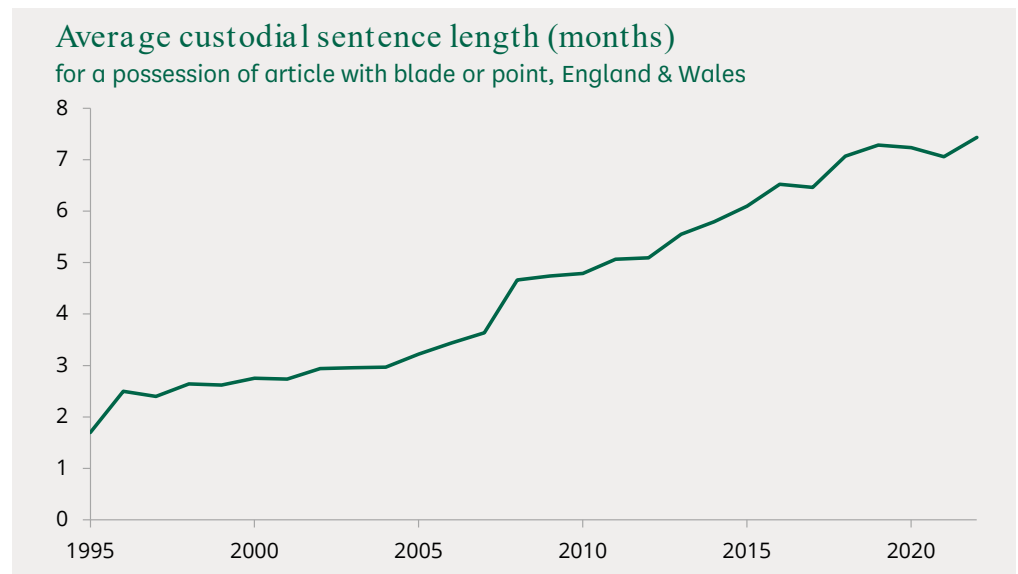
<sup>16</sup> Ministry of Justice, [Knife and Offensive Weapon Sentencing Statistics: January to March 2023](#), 17 August 2023

<sup>17</sup> Juveniles receive reprimands, warnings and youth cautions rather than cautions.



Source: Ministry of Justice, [Criminal Justice System statistics quarterly: December 2022](#), Out of court disposals and Outcomes by Offence data tools, 18 May 2023

The proportion of proven offenders sentenced to custody increased in 1997, following the [Offensive Weapons Act 1996](#), stabilising at around 10% until 2008 when it increased to 15%. The proportion sentenced to custody rose steadily every year between 2012 and 2019. In 2022, 28% of proven offenders were sentenced to custody, a decrease of five percentage points from 2019.



Source: Ministry of Justice, [Criminal Justice System statistics quarterly: December 2022](#), Outcomes by Offence data tool, 18 May 2023

The chart above indicates the average custodial sentence length (ACSL) has increased since 1995. There was a more marked increase from 2008. In 2015 the ACSL exceeded six months for the first time, and in 2018 the ACSL exceeded seven months for the first time. Since this time the ACSL has increased to 7.4 months in 2022.



Source: Ministry of Justice, [Criminal Justice System statistics quarterly: December 2022](#), Outcomes by Offence data tool, 18 May 2023

The chart above shows before 2008 around 2 to 5% of offenders were sentenced to custody of at least one year. Since 2008, more than 8% of offenders sentenced to custody have been sentenced to at least one year with the proportion increasing to just over 16% in 2018 and 2019. In 2022, 18.7% of custodial sentences for possession of knife offences were longer than one year.

## 5 Hospital data

Police and courts crime data depends on offences being reported to the authorities, which is a weakness. To get a more rounded view on knife crime it is useful to supplement this information with alternative sources such as NHS hospital data.

### Box 2: Finished consultant episode.

A finished consultant episode (FCE) is a continuous period of care for an admitted patient under one consultant within one healthcare provider. FCEs are counted based on the year in which the time in hospital ends. Figures do not represent the number of different patients, as a person may have more than one episode of care within the same stay in hospital or in different stays in the same year.

Information on the number of finished consultant episodes (FCE) in English hospitals related to assault by a sharp object (stab wounds)<sup>18</sup> is provided in the [Hospital Episode Statistics \(HES\) publication](#). These figures cover admitted patient care only and do not include people who attended an Accident and Emergency department but were not subsequently admitted to hospital.

<sup>18</sup> This is clinical code X99 in ICD-10. This code includes cases where someone has been attacked using a sharp object of some kind (including but not exclusive to knives). Code “W26” - contact with a knife, sword or dagger - is used for such diagnoses as accidental knife injuries and excludes assault. Therefore, code W26 has not been used here.



## Number of finished consultant episodes for assault by sharp object

By sex and age group, England

Year	Total	Change	Of which			Of which aged			
			Male	Female	Unknown	Under 16	16-18	19+	Unknown
2010/11	4,647	-0.9%	4,164	482	1	159	568	3,903	17
2011/12	4,490	-3.4%	4,060	430	0	158	484	3,832	16
2012/13	3,888	-13.4%	3,481	406	1	95	394	3,389	10
2013/14	3,730	-4.1%	3,317	412	1	104	370	3,246	10
2014/15	3,643	-2.3%	3,303	340	0	111	340	3,178	14
2015/16	4,119	13.1%	3,767	351	1	149	432	3,521	17
2016/17	4,434	7.6%	4,054	379	1	162	524	3,720	28
2017/18	5,053	14.0%	4,665	385	3	163	650	4,173	67
2018/19	5,149	1.9%	4,747	399	3	222	627	4,268	32
2019/20	4,757	-7.6%	4,364	391	2	184	585	3,965	23
2020/21	4,091	-14.0%	3,708	383	0	180	514	3,378	19
2021/22	4,171	2.0%	3,836	334	1	175	480	3,485	31
2022/23	3,775	-9.5%	3,430	341	4	175	471	3,102	27

Note: Activity in English NHS Hospitals and English NHS commissioned activity in the independent sector.

Source: NHS Digital, [Hospital Admitted Patient Care Activity, 2022-23: External causes tables](#), 21 September 2022.

There were 3,775 FCEs recorded in English hospitals in 2022/23 due to assault by a sharp object. This was a 9.5% decrease compared to 2021/22, and a 3.6% increase from 2014/15 (the lowest number of admissions during this period).

In 2022/23, 17% of those admitted to hospital for assault by sharp object were aged 18 or younger. Around 91% of people admitted to hospital for assault by sharp objects were male.

Numbers rose from 1998/99 until reaching a peak of 5,720 in 2006/07. Admissions subsequently decreased before rising again in recent years.

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