

Research Briefing

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# Knife crime in England and Wales: statistics



## Summary

- 1 Introduction
- 2 Police recorded crime data
- 3 Crime Survey of England and Wales data
- 4 Convictions for knife offences
- 5 Hospital data

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## Summary

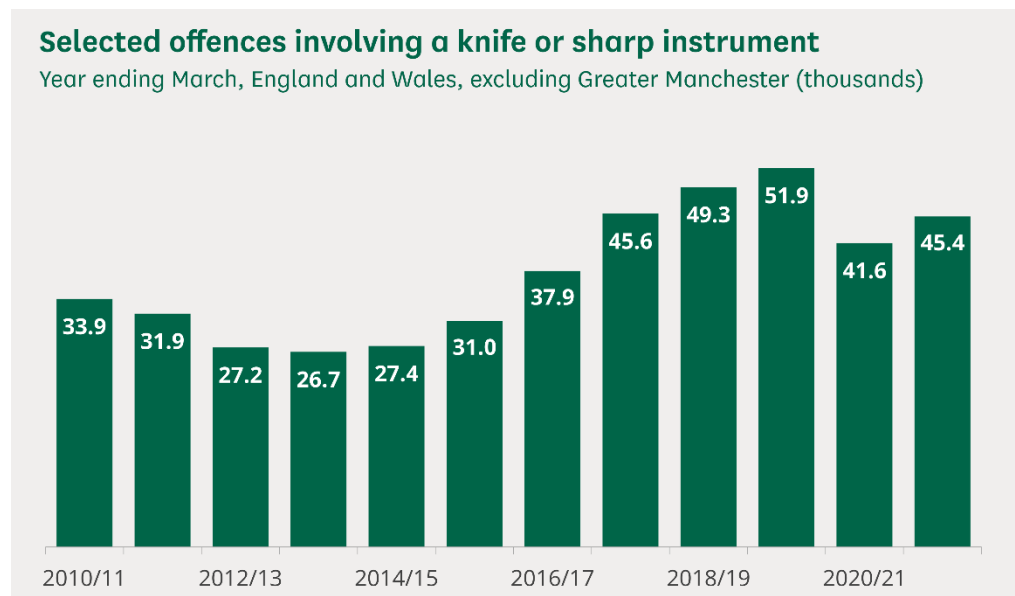
The briefing paper presents and analyses statistics on knife crime in England and Wales.

Knife crime is a crime involving an object with a blade or sharp instrument. It is a persistent police priority and disproportionately impacts young people and disadvantaged people.

## 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 2022, there were around [45,000 offences involving a knife or sharp instrument in England and Wales](#) (excluding Greater Manchester Police Force). This was 9% higher than in 2020/21 and 34% higher than in 2010/11.



Source: ONS, [Crime in England and Wales: Other related tables](#), Table F3a, 21 July 2022 and earlier editions.

Recent trends in knife crime have been affected by undercounting in the Greater Manchester Police Force area before 2018/19. Increases in recorded offences since 2018/19 are directly related with improvements in recording practices.

## 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 [West Midlands Police Force recorded the highest rate of 152 offences involving a knife per 100,000 population in 2021/22](#). This is a 3% decrease on a rate of 156 recorded in 2020/21. Dyfed-Powys had the lowest rate of 34 offences per 100,000 individuals (up from 28 in 2020/21).

## Proven offences and offenders

Sentencing statistics from the Ministry of Justice shows that in the year ending March 2022, there were [19,555 cautions and convictions made for possession of a knife or offensive weapon](#). Juveniles (aged 10-17) were the offenders in 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 [4,171 “hospital episodes” recorded in English hospitals in 2021/22](#) due to assault by a sharp object. This was 2% higher than in 2020/21 and 14% higher than in 2014/15.

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Offences relating to knife crime

The Library briefing [Knives and Offensive Weapons](#) 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.

## 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>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Sentencing Council, [Bladed articles and offensive weapons - possession](#)

## 1.3

### Further reading

The following knife crime-related publications are provided by the Library:

#### **Briefing papers**

[Serious Youth Violence](#), 2022

[Knives and offensive weapons](#), 2019

[Offensive Weapons Bill 2017-19 \(HC Bill 232\)](#), 2019

#### **Insights**

[Serious violence and knife crime: Law enforcement and early intervention](#), 2020

[How is the Government implementing a 'public health approach' to serious violence?](#), 2019

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## 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 (ie 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>4</sup>

Twenty police forces have been involved in a pilot scheme to implement 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).

The pilot has shown to improve data quality and comparability, leading to a national rollout of the new process. As more forces switch to the NDQIS tool, historical data for these forces and for England and Wales will continue to be updated.<sup>5</sup>

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.

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<sup>4</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).

<sup>5</sup> ONS, [Police recorded offences involving knives or sharp instruments: methodology changes](#), 13 May 2021

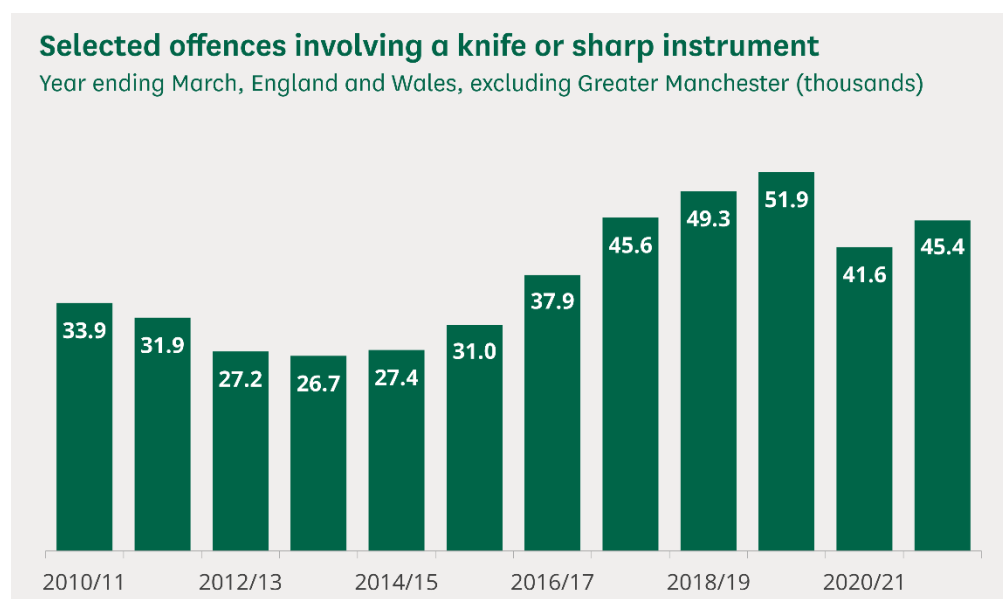


## 2.1

### Trends over time

In 2021/22 there were around 45,400 offences involving a sharp instrument in England and Wales. This was 9.1% higher than in 2020/21 and 33.7% higher than in 2010/11.

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 six years. This chart excludes data from Greater Manchester Police Force – see box one below for more information on this.



Source: ONS, [Crime in England and Wales: Other related tables](#), Table F3a, 21 July 2022 and earlier editions.

The main offences involving a knife or sharp instrument recorded in 2021/22 were assault with injury and intent to cause serious harm (49.9%) and robbery (34.3%). The chart below shows there were more offences committed in all categories (except for robbery) in 2021/22 compared to 2010/11. This data excludes Greater Manchester Police Force.

Since 2010/11, the total number of selected offences involving a knife or sharp instrument has increased by 34% (from around 34,000 to 45,000) and the number of threats to kill using knives or sharp objects has nearly quadrupled (from around 1,400 to 5,500).

Data tables showing the number of offences involving knives or sharp instruments can be found in the appendix and accompanying downloadable data tables.



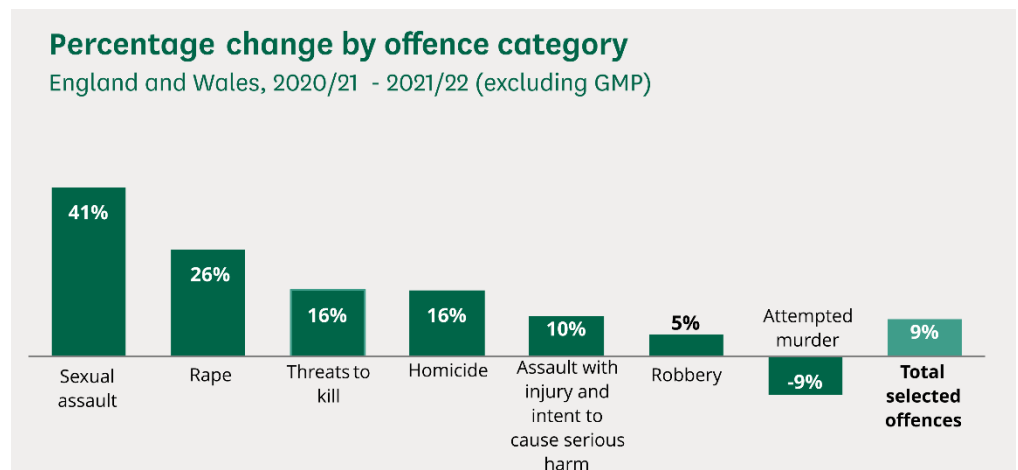
Source: ONS, [Crime in England and Wales: Other related tables](#), Table F3, 21 July 2022 and earlier editions.

The chart below the percentage change of each knife crime related offence between 2020/21 and 2021/22.

During that year, the total number of offences involving a knife or sharp instrument increased by 9% (from 41,600 to 45,400).

Sexual assault involving a knife increased the most (41%, 206 to 290), followed by rape (26%, 542 to 681) and threats to kill and homicide (both 16%, 4,800 to 5,500 and 225 to 261, respectively).

Attempted murder was the only offence category with decrease (of 9%) in the twelve months to March 2022 (460 to 418). 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.



Source: ONS, [Crime in England and Wales: Other related tables](#), Table F3a, 21 July 2022 and earlier editions. GMP: Greater Manchester Police.

### 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 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. The Covid-19 pandemic had a significant impact on patterns of crime. There has been 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.

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

Further number and proportion of selected violent and sexual offences involving a knife or sharp instrument recorded by the police can be found in the appendix and accompanying downloadable data tables.

## 2.2

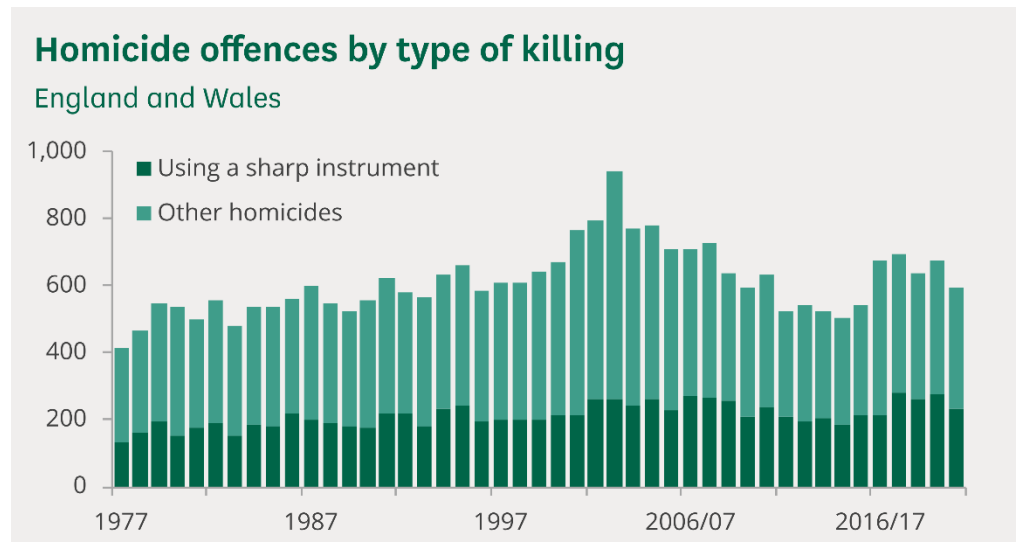
### Homicide

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 2021 suggest there were 224 homicides involving a knife or sharp instrument.<sup>6</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 appendix and accompanying data tables.

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<sup>6</sup> ONS, [Appendix tables: homicide in England and Wales](#), table 6A



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 7A, 10 February 2022 and earlier editions

In 1977, there were 135 homicides involving a sharp instrument including knives and broken bottles. This accounted for 32.7% of all homicides. In 2020/21, there were 235 recorded homicides using a sharp instrument. The highest number of homicides using a sharp instrument recorded between 1977 and 2021 was 281 in 2017/18. This accounted for 40.4% 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 2020/21, 44% of homicides with a male victim involved a knife or sharp instrument, compared to 29% of female victims.

## 2.3

### Knife crime by police force area

In 2021/22, West Midlands Police recorded the highest rate of 152 offences per 100,000 population. In contrast, the Surrey and Wiltshire forces recorded the lowest rate of 38 offences each, per 100,000 population.

Overall, urban forces tend to record higher levels of crime involving knives than more rural ones.

Data tables the appendix and accompanying downloadable data file show the number and rate per 100,000 population of selected offences involving a knife or sharp instrument for each police force area. The chart below provides a comparison of knife crime rates between 2010/11 and 2021/22.

<b>Rates of knife crime by police force area</b>					
Per 100,000 head of population, 2021/22					
<b>Top ten</b>			<b>Greatest % increase since 2010/11</b>		
Rank	Police force area	Rate per 100,000	Rank	Police force area	% change
1	West Midlands	152	1	Surrey	+559%
2	Cleveland	139	2	Kent	+227%
3	City of London	128	3	Sussex	+168%
4	Greater Manchester	128	4	Hampshire	+167%
5	Metropolitan Police	124	5	Essex	+166%
6	South Yorkshire	111	6	Norfolk	+165%
7	Merseyside	108	7	Cleveland	+164%
8	West Yorkshire	102	8	Hertfordshire	+149%
9	Northamptonshire	88	9	Merseyside	+141%
10	Bedfordshire	87	10	North Wales	+132%
<b>Bottom ten</b>			<b>Smallest % increase since 2010/11</b>		
Rank	Police force area	Rate per 100,000	Rank	Police force area	% change
10	Durham	47	10	Avon and Somerset	+48%
9	West Mercia	46	9	Lancashire	+47%
8	Gloucestershire	46	8	Gloucestershire	+45%
7	Cumbria	43	7	Bedfordshire	+35%
6	Devon and Cornwall	40	6	West Mercia	+30%
5	Suffolk	39	5	Nottinghamshire	+22%
4	Dorset	39	4	Devon and Cornwall	+14%
3	Surrey	38	3	Thames Valley	-3%
2	Wiltshire	38	2	West Midlands	-8%
1	Dyfed-Powys	34	1	Metropolitan Police	-23%

Source: ONS, [Crime in England and Wales: Police Force Area Data Tables](#), Table P6, 21 July 2022 and earlier editions

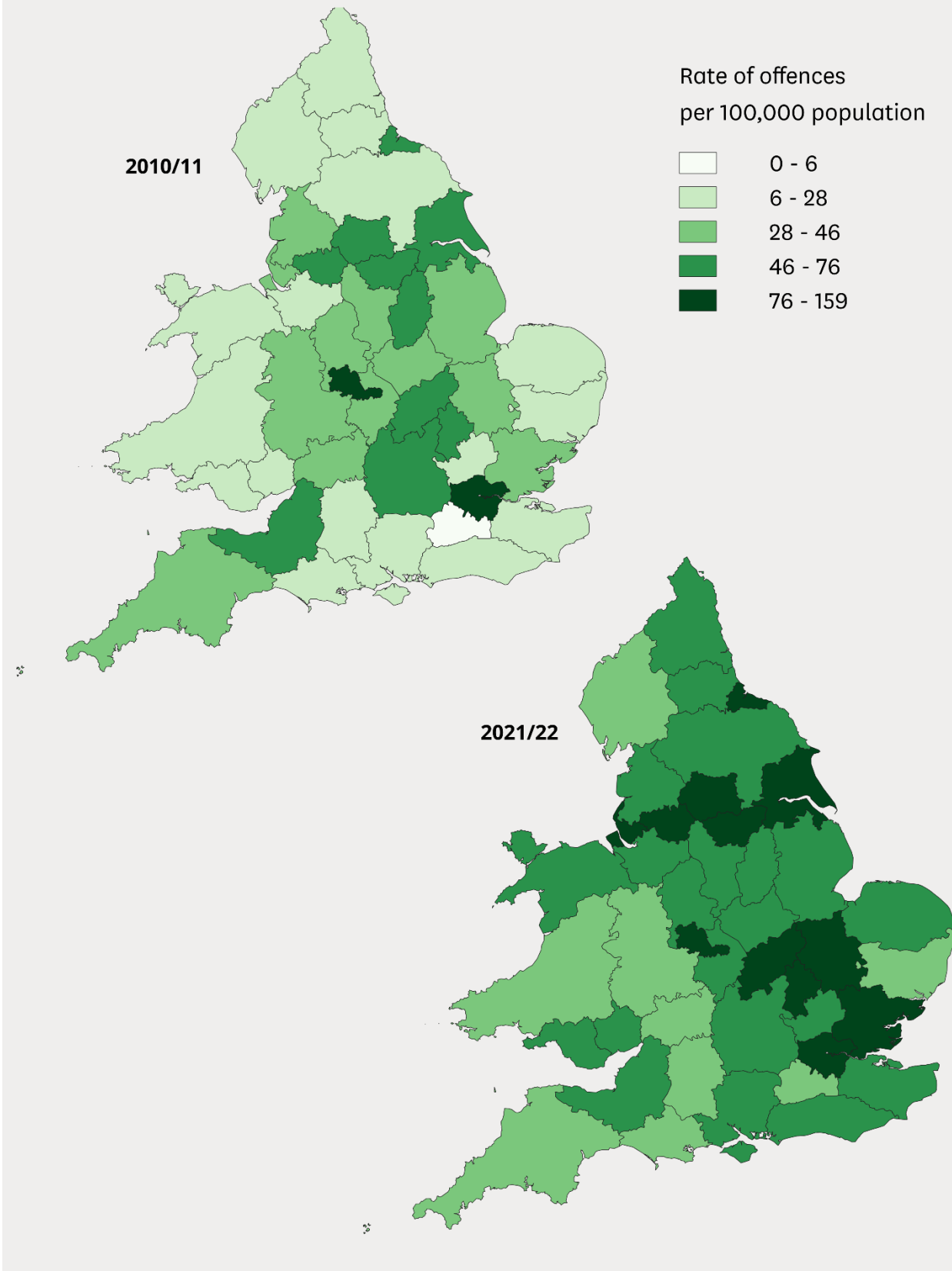
Between 2010/11 and 2021/22, Surrey experienced the largest percentage increase in selected knife and sharp instrument offences: from 6 per 100,000 population in 2010/11 to 38 in 2021/22.

Kent also had a large percentage increase from 21 offences per 100,000 population in 2010/11 to 67 in 2021/22. London recorded the largest decrease in offences per 100,000 from 152 in 2010/11 to 124 in 2021/22.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Figures for London include Metropolitan Police Service and City of London

## Knife and sharp instrument offences recorded by the police

England and Wales, 2010/11 and 2021/22



Source: ONS, [Crime in England and Wales: Police Force Area Data Tables](#), Table P6, 27 October 2022 and earlier editions

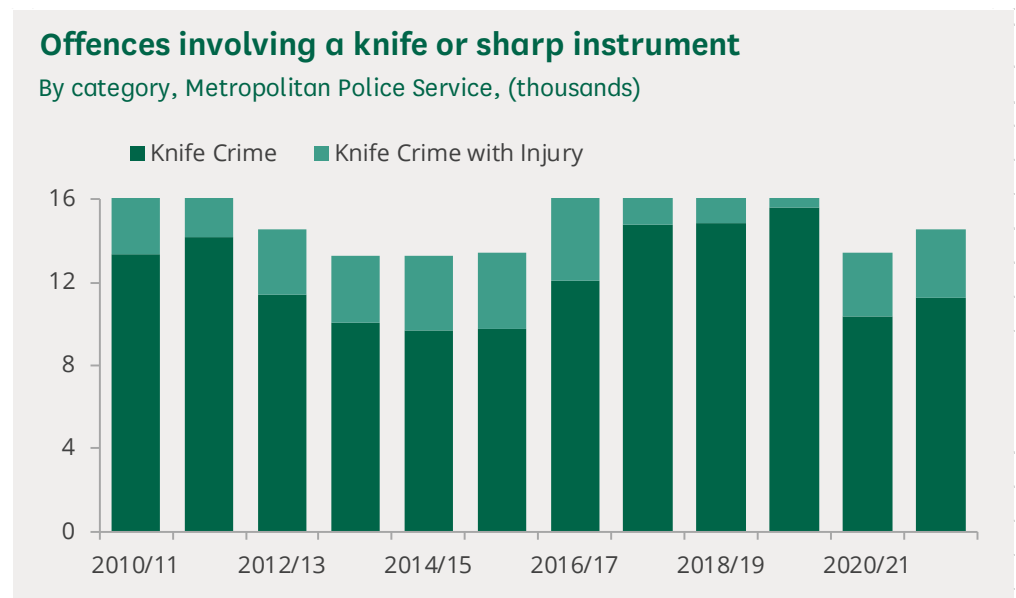
## 2.4

### 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 2021/22](#) dashboard. Unlike the nation-wide data provided by the Home Office, MPS data is broken down by London borough.

The chart below shows that the number of knife or sharp instrument crimes recorded by the MPS rose from 2010/11, reaching an initial peak of over 14,000 incidents in 2011/12.

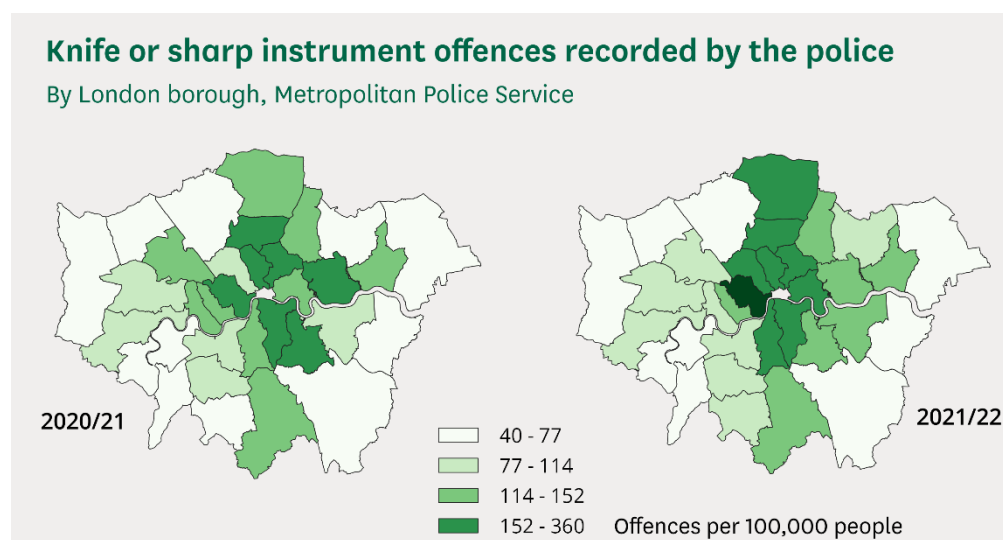
The number of recorded offences then decreased to roughly 9,700 in 2014/15 before rising to around 15,600 in 2019/20 – the highest level during this period. Knife crime with injury rose by 15% from roughly 4,100 offences in 2010/11 to 4,700 in 2017/18. It has since fallen to around 3,300 in 2021/22.



Source: Metropolitan Police Service, [Crime statistics 2021/22](#) Accessed: 01 August 2022; Data prior to 2017: London Assembly, [Metropolitan Police Service – Recorded Crime, 20 July 2017 \(no longer available\)](#)

### By borough

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



Source: Metropolitan Police Service, [Crime statistics 2021/22](#), Accessed: 23 November 2022

This table shows the overall number and rate of knife crime offences by London borough for 2021/22.

Knife crime by London borough								
Total number of incidents and rate per 100,000 head of population, 2021/22								
Borough	No.	Rate	Borough	No.	Rate	Borough	No.	Rate
Westminster	722	352	Kensington & Chelsea	210	146	Hounslow	257	89
Haringey	666	252	Croydon	537	138	Sutton	177	84
Hackney	498	192	Greenwich	387	134	Hillingdon	236	77
Lambeth	599	189	Waltham Forest	354	127	Barnet	290	75
Enfield	610	185	Lewisham	377	126	Bexley	176	71
Camden	356	169	Hammersmith & Fulham	209	114	Havering	175	67
Tower Hamlets	522	167	Ealing	399	109	Harrow	171	66
Islington	355	164	Brent	365	108	Bromley	197	60
Southwark	494	161	Redbridge	318	103	Kingston upon Thames	100	60
Newham	534	152	Wandsworth	321	98	Richmond upon Thames	90	46
Barking & Dagenham	329	151	Merton	206	96			

Source: Metropolitan Police Service, [Crime statistics 2021/22](#), Accessed: 01 August 2022

In 2021/22, the highest number of knife or sharp instrument offences in London was recorded in Westminster (722 offences or 352 per 100,000). The lowest number of offences was in Richmond upon Thames (90 offences or 46 per 100,000).

The total number of offences involving knife crime increased by 8% from 10,363 in 2020/21 to 11,263 in 2021/22.

Selected knife related offences in Hounslow decreased from 278 in 2020/21 to 257 in 2021/22 (-8%). This was the highest proportional decrease over the period. The highest proportional increase of 71% was recorded in Westminster (from 423 offences in 2020/21 to 722 in 2021/22).



## 3

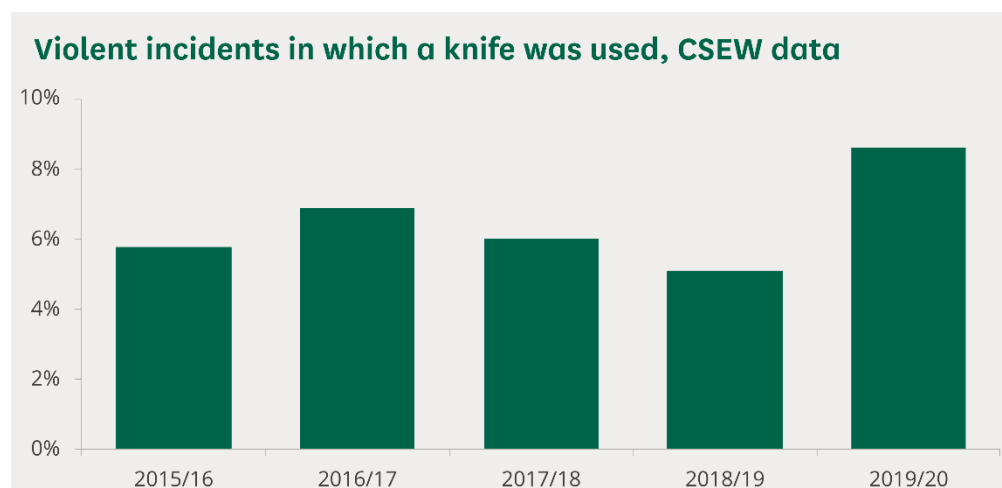
## Crime Survey of England and Wales data

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>11</sup>

Data from 2015/16 onwards is not comparable with previous years. This is because the survey method for the CSEW changed from a face-to-face to a telephone survey.<sup>12</sup>

The most recent data is from 2019/20: after then, the CSEW did not publish data on incidents where a knife was used.



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>11</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>12</sup> ONS, 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

Since January 2009, the CSEW has 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>13</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>13</sup> ONS, [The nature of violent crime: appendix tables](#), 7 February 2019, Table 9

## 4 Convictions for knife offences

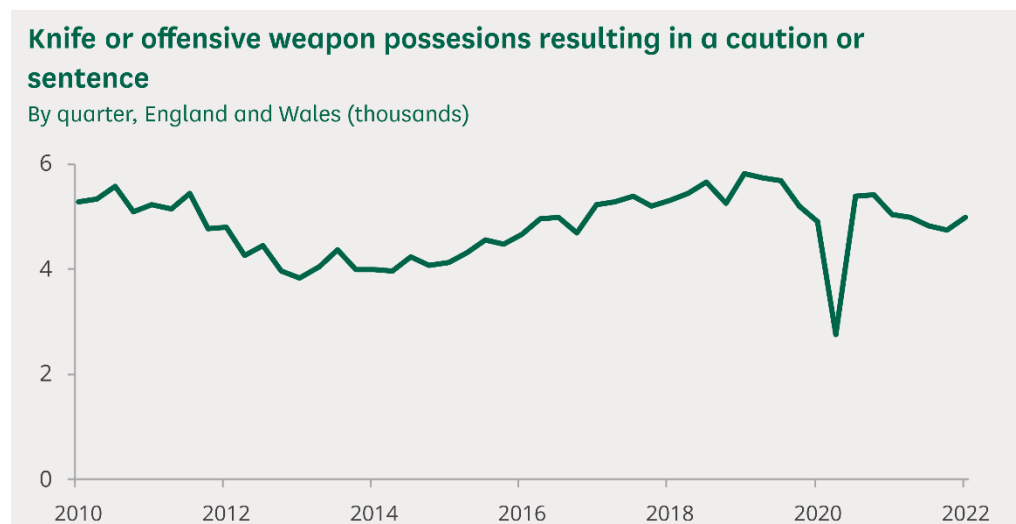
Statistics showing the number of violent crime prosecutions involving a knife are not available because data on the circumstances of each offence are not collected centrally.

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>15</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>16</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: Year ending March 2022](#), 18 August 2022, Table 1.

<sup>15</sup> Offensive weapons include sharp instruments and other dangerous weapons (excluding firearms).

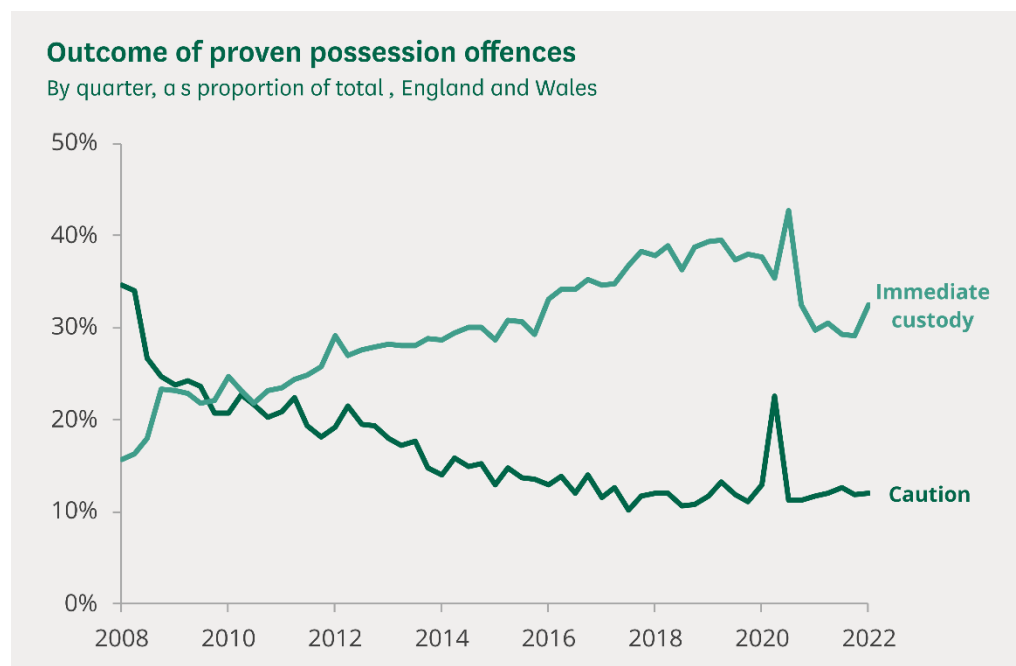
<sup>16</sup> Police forces tend to record cautions more promptly on the PNC than court sentences. The latest caution figures are likely to be revised less than the sentencing figures.

While the published tables show Q4 2007 onwards, data from the PNC is available in the accompanying downloadable data tables. As shown in the chart, 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. It has remained at around this level through to Q1 2022.<sup>17</sup>

Around 5,000 knife or offensive weapon possessions resulted in a caution or sentence in Q1 2022. The low figure in Q2 2020 was recorded during the first national Covid-19 lockdown.

The number of possessions 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. **In Q1 2022, there were 4,981 knife or offensive weapon possessions recorded which was 1% lower than the 5,038 in Q1 2021.**

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: Year ending March 2021](#), 19 August 2021, 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>18</sup> The effect of this

<sup>17</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>18</sup> [R v Povey \[2008\] EWCA Crim 1261](#)

judgement can be seen in the increased use of custody since Q3 2008. [The Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015](#) introduced provision for a minimum 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 2022, 28% of knife and offensive weapon possession offences resulting in immediate custodial sentences. This fall is due to the complications associated with the pandemic and a backlog of cases at the Crown Court which are still awaiting final decisions.<sup>19</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 2022 shows there were 19,555 disposals given for possession of a knife or offensive weapon.<sup>20</sup> Of these:

- Juveniles (aged 10-17) were the offenders in 18% of cases;
- The juvenile custody rate was 6% and caution rate was 38%;<sup>21</sup>
- For adults the custody rate was 35% and caution rate was 7%;
- Juveniles received a community sentence in 51% of cases and adults 18%.

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 cautioned for possession of knife offences has been falling over the period. Since 2007, there has been a fall from 36% to 14% in 2020. This is likely linked to the Court of Appeal judgement of May 2008.

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<sup>19</sup> Ministry of Justice, [Knife and Offensive Weapons sentencing statistics: year ending March 2021](#), 19 August 2021.

<sup>20</sup> Ministry of Justice, [Knife and Offensive Weapons Sentencing statistics: year ending March 2022](#), 18 August 2022, Table 1.

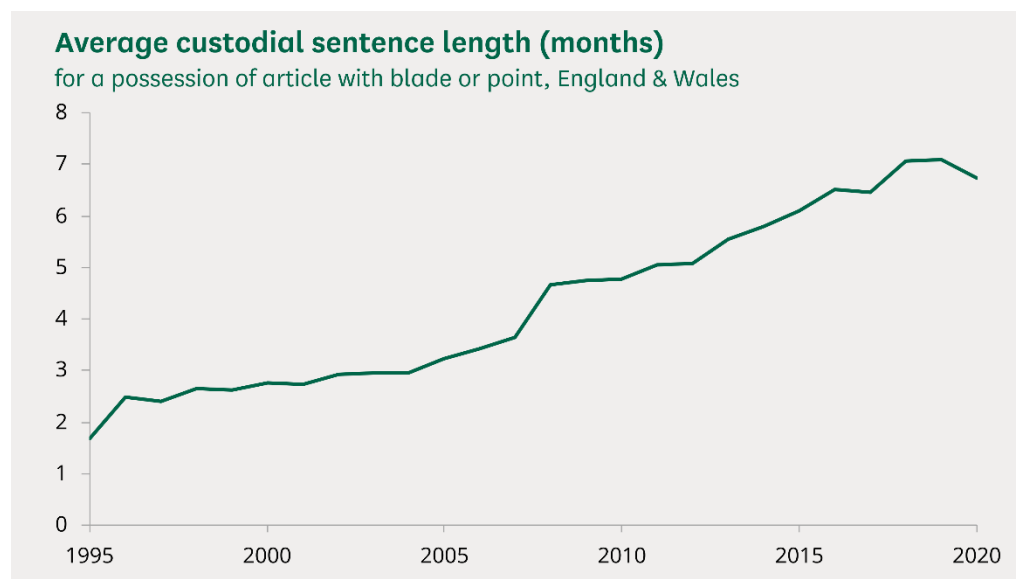
<sup>21</sup> Juveniles receive reprimands and warnings rather than cautions.



Source: Ministry of Justice, Criminal Justice System statistics quarterly: December 2020, [Outcomes by Offence data tool](#), 20 May 2021; Ministry of Justice, [Knife and offensive weapon sentencing statistics: Year ending March 2021](#), 19 August 2021, Table 1

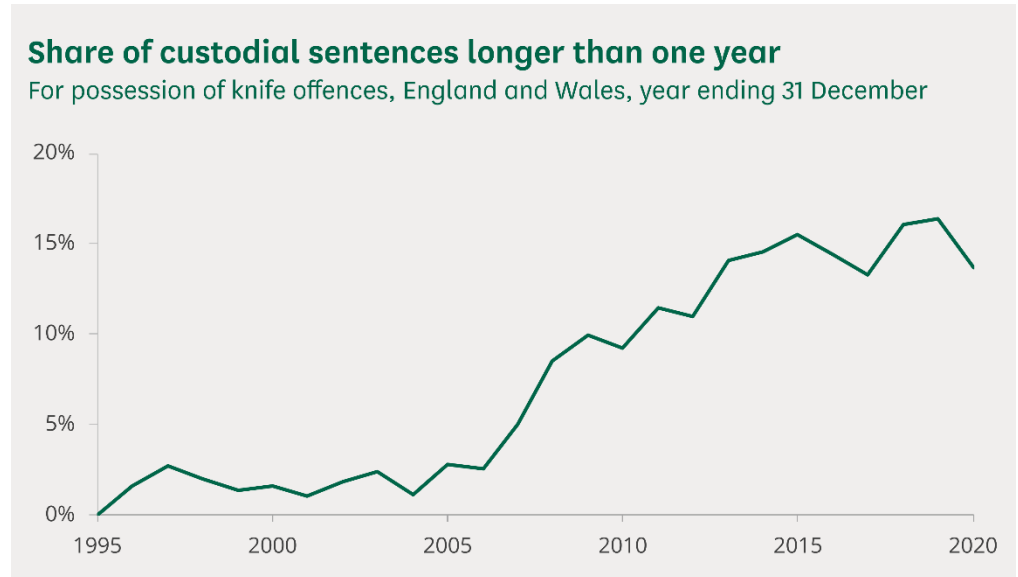
For information on the number of people cautioned or convicted since 1991 for possessing a knife in a public place or on school premises in England and Wales, see the appended table A8.

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 2020, 32% of proven offenders were sentenced to custody, a decrease of one percentage point from 2019.



Source: Ministry of Justice, Criminal Justice System statistics quarterly: December 2020, [Outcomes by Offence data tool](#), 20 May 2021

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. The most recent data is for 2020: more recent data is not provided for knife crime specifically.



Source: Ministry of Justice, Criminal Justice System statistics quarterly: December 2020, [Outcomes by Offence data tool](#), 20 May 2021; Ministry of Justice, [Knife and offensive weapon sentencing statistics: Year ending March 2021](#), 19 August 2021, Table 1

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 2020, 13.7% 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.

Information on the number of finished consultant episodes (FCE) in English hospitals related to assault by a sharp object (stab wounds)<sup>22</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.

### 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.

<sup>22</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

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

Source: NHS Digital, [Hospital Admitted Patient Care Activity, 2021-22: External causes tables](#), 22 September 2022

There were 4,171 FCEs recorded in English hospitals in 2021/22 due to assault by a sharp object. This was a 2% increase compared to 2020/21, and a 14% increase from 2014/15 (the lowest number of admissions during this period).

In 2021/22, 16% of those admitted to hospital for assault by sharp object were aged 18 or younger. Around 92% 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.

## Appendix

### Violent incidents in which a knife was used, CSEW data<sup>1</sup>

Percentage of all incidents, England and Wales

	Victim-offender relationship			Type of violence				All violence
	Domestic	Stranger	Acquaintance	Mugging	Wounding	Robbery	Common Assault	
1995	7%	4%	7%	25%	9%	29%	5%	<b>8%</b>
1997	4%	4%	3%	14%	5%	17%	3%	<b>5%</b>
1999	4%	3%	4%	15%	9%	18%	2%	<b>5%</b>
2001/02	7%	5%	5%	15%	10%	18%	4%	<b>7%</b>
2002/03	5%	7%	8%	15%	6%	19%	8%	<b>8%</b>
2003/04	2%	3%	7%	8%	4%	10%	4%	<b>5%</b>
2004/05	7%	4%	7%	7%	5%	10%	6%	<b>6%</b>
2005/06	6%	6%	6%	11%	6%	13%	6%	<b>7%</b>
2006/07 <sup>2</sup>	5%	5%	7%	16%	7%	20%	9%	<b>7%</b>
2007/08	6%	4%	6%	12%	8%	15%	7%	<b>6%</b>
2008/09	3%	6%	7%	12%	8%	17%	10%	<b>8%</b>
2009/10	4%	3%	3%	12%	3%	15%	3%	<b>5%</b>
2010/11	4%	4%	3%	19%	1%	24%	8%	<b>6%</b>
2011/12	5%	3%	6%	14%	3%	19%	9%	<b>7%</b>
2013/14	4%	3%	10%	* <sup>4</sup>	3%	* <sup>4</sup>	12%	<b>6%</b>
2014/15	3%	8%	10%	* <sup>4</sup>	7%	* <sup>4</sup>	12%	<b>7%</b>
2015/16 <sup>3</sup>	13%	3%	4%	* <sup>4</sup>	6%	* <sup>4</sup>	8%	<b>6%</b>
2016/17	6%	8%	4%	* <sup>4</sup>	4%	* <sup>4</sup>	13%	<b>7%</b>
2017/18	5%	9%	3%	* <sup>4</sup>	6%	* <sup>4</sup>	10%	<b>6%</b>

Notes:

1. Most recent data is for 2017/18 due to changes to the survey in the most recent release of the data which does not include victim-offender relationship and type of violence related to knife crime offences.
2. From 2006/07 Common Assault figure is sum of 'Assault with minor injury' and 'Assault with no injury'.
3. Data from 2015/16 onwards includes screwdrivers and other stabbing implements and is not comparable with previous years.
4. Data not reported for this category.

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

## Selected offences involving a knife or sharp instrument

Violent and sexual offences recorded by the police, England and Wales (excluding Greater Manchester Police)

Time period	Attempted murder		Threats to kill		Assault with injury and intent to cause serious harm		Robbery		Rape		Sexual assault		Homicide		Total
	No.	Prop.	No.	Prop.	No.	Prop.	No.	Prop.	No.	Prop.	No.	Prop.	No.	Prop.	
2015/16	336	1.1%	2,303	7.4%	16,283	52.5%	11,464	37.0%	312	1.0%	108	0.3%	196	0.6%	<b>31,002</b>
2016/17	339	0.9%	2,921	7.7%	19,547	51.6%	14,307	37.8%	403	1.1%	171	0.5%	201	0.5%	<b>37,889</b>
2017/18	361	0.8%	3,407	7.5%	21,867	47.9%	19,128	41.9%	439	1.0%	160	0.4%	264	0.6%	<b>45,626</b>
2018/19	409	0.8%	3,938	8.0%	22,847	46.4%	21,145	42.9%	524	1.1%	158	0.3%	250	0.5%	<b>49,271</b>
2019/20	463	0.9%	4,730	9.1%	22,898	44.1%	22,623	43.6%	643	1.2%	278	0.5%	258	0.5%	<b>51,893</b>
2020/21	460	1.1%	4,761	11.4%	20,627	49.6%	14,788	35.5%	542	1.3%	206	0.5%	225	0.5%	<b>41,609</b>
2021/22	418	0.9%	5,525	12.2%	22,646	49.9%	15,570	34.3%	681	1.5%	290	0.6%	261	0.6%	<b>45,391</b>
															Total selected offences including homicide
2020/21 - 2020/22	-9.1%		16.0%		9.8%		5.3%		25.6%		40.8%		16.0%		<b>+9.1%</b>
2015/16 - 2021/22	24.4%		139.9%		39.1%		35.8%		118.3%		168.5%		33.2%		<b>46.4%</b>

Notes:

- Changes to offence codes in April 2012 mean the category of Assault with injury and assault with intent to cause serious harm is not directly comparable with previous years.
- Police recorded crime statistics for offences involving a knife or sharp instrument based on data from 43 police forces in England and Wales. Data from Greater Manchester Police are excluded. A review of Greater Manchester Police data has identified undercounting of crimes involving a knife or sharp instrument. This occurred due to a technical issue with the identification and extraction of all relevant records of these offences from their crime recording system. GMP have changed the methodology they use to extract knife or sharp instrument offences and data from December 2017 onwards have been revised. However, data for earlier periods have not been revised and are likely to exclude relevant crimes that were recorded in GMP. Due to these changes, data for GMP have been excluded from the time series.

Source:

ONS, Crime in England and Wales: [Other related tables, Table F3a and 3b](#), 21 July 2022 and earlier editions

## Offences currently recorded as homicide by apparent method of killing<sup>1,2</sup>

England and Wales, 2010/11-2019/20

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2019/20
Sharp instrument	211	216	281	260	270	235
Blunt instrument	45	49	37	37	48	32
Hitting, kicking, etc.	100	112	103	100	113	107
Strangulation, asphyxiation <sup>8</sup>	48	135	52	55	78	27
Shooting <sup>9</sup>	25	32	27	32	30	35
Explosion <sup>10</sup>	0	2	34	0	0	0
Burning	13	7	12	11	13	8
Drowning	6	5	4	5	3	10
Poison or drugs	17	15	22	13	11	16
Motor vehicle <sup>11</sup>	8	22	17	10	23	20
Other	38	48	62	67	41	52
Not known	29	32	45	46	43	52
<b>Total<sup>3, 4, 5, 6, 7</sup></b>	<b>540</b>	<b>675</b>	<b>696</b>	<b>636</b>	<b>673</b>	<b>594</b>
<i>% involving a sharp instrument</i>	<i>39.1%</i>	<i>32.0%</i>	<i>40.4%</i>	<i>40.9%</i>	<i>40.1%</i>	<i>39.6%</i>

### Notes:

1. As at 15 December 2020; figures are subject to revision as cases are dealt with by the police and the courts, or as further information becomes available.
2. Home Office statisticians and Police Forces have undertaken a review of all historical homicide data to update court outcomes and suspect data, this means totals shown in this table will not match previously published figures, as included in Table 2.
- 3-7. Years ending March 2012, March 2015, March 2016 and March 2019, March 2020 each include 1 victim with unknown gender.
8. Year ending March 2017 includes 96 victims of Hillsborough.
9. These figures may not agree with those in the weapons tables because (a) figures include cases where the firearm was used as a blunt instrument and (b) homicide figures include shooting by crossbows and are compiled at a later date and take into account the results of police and court decisions.
10. Year ending March 2018 includes 22 victims of the Manchester Arena bombing.
11. Excluding death by careless/dangerous driving and aggravated vehicle taking.

### Source:

ONS, [Homicide in England and Wales: Appendix tables](#), Table 7A, 10 February 2022

## Knife or sharp instrument offences recorded by the police for selected offences<sup>1,2,3</sup>

Year ending March, England and Wales

	2018/19		2019/20		2020/21		2021/22		Change per 100,000, 2018/19 - 2021/22	
	Offences per 100,000		Offences per 100,000		Offences per 100,000		Offences per 100,000		Actual change	% change
	Number	population	Number	population	Number	population <sup>7</sup>	Number	population		
Cleveland	601	106	708	125	692	122	794	139	+34	32%
Durham	196	31	165	26	138	22	300	47	+16	52%
Northumbria	942	64	794	55	857	59	918	62	-2	-3%
<b>North East</b>	<b>1,739</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>1,667</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>1,687</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>+10</b>	<b>15%</b>
Cheshire	374	35	401	38	265	25	533	50	+15	42%
Cumbria	162	32	203	41	186	37	215	43	+11	33%
Greater Manchester <sup>4</sup>	3,169	112	3,192	113	3,027	107	3,636	128	+16	14%
Lancashire	1,151	76	1,137	76	1,020	68	1,039	69	-8	-10%
Merseyside	1,399	98	1,424	100	1,228	86	1,549	108	+10	10%
<i>North West, including GMP</i>	<b>6,255</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>6,353</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>5,726</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>6,972</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>+9</b>	<b>11%</b>
<b>North West, Less GMP</b>	<b>3,086</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>3,165</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>2,699</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>3,336</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>+5</b>	<b>8%</b>
Humberside	897	96	873	94	714	77	794	85	-11	-12%
North Yorkshire	300	36	331	40	343	41	400	48	+12	33%
South Yorkshire	1,754	124	1,619	115	1,319	94	1,567	111	-14	-11%
West Yorkshire	2,807	120	2,529	109	2,200	94	2,399	102	-18	-15%
<b>Yorkshire and the Humber</b>	<b>5,758</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>5,352</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>4,576</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>5,160</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>-11</b>	<b>-11%</b>

Notes: See below.

Source: ONS, [Crime in England and Wales Police Force Area data tables](#), Table P6, 21 July 2022

## Knife or sharp instrument offences recorded by the police for selected offences<sup>1,2,3</sup>

Year ending March, England and Wales

	2018/19		2019/20		2020/21		2021/22		Change per 100,000, 2018/19 - 2021/22	
	Offences per 100,000		Offences per 100,000		Offences per 100,000		Offences per 100,000		Actual change	% change
	Number	population	Number	population	Number	population <sup>7</sup>	Number	population		
Derbyshire	653	62	854	81	728	69	754	71	+9	15%
Leicestershire	942	86	853	78	797	72	816	74	-12	-14%
Lincolnshire	328	43	424	56	371	49	482	63	+20	46%
Northamptonshire	602	80	717	96	724	96	664	88	+8	10%
Nottinghamshire	1,016	88	891	77	755	65	827	71	-17	-19%
<b>East Midlands</b>	<b>3,541</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>3,739</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>3,375</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>3543</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-1%</b>
Staffordshire	673	59	598	53	599	53	692	61	+1	2%
Warwickshire	272	47	347	61	280	48	324	55	+8	18%
West Mercia	534	41	733	57	629	49	603	46	+5	12%
West Midlands	4,951	169	5,020	172	4,562	156	4455	152	-18	-10%
<b>West Midlands Region</b>	<b>6,430</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>6,698</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>6,070</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>6074</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>-6</b>	<b>-6%</b>
Bedfordshire	590	87	648	97	584	87	596	87	-	0%
Cambridgeshire	470	55	711	83	681	80	674	78	+23	43%
Essex	750	41	1,121	61	1,536	83	1522	82	+41	102%
Hertfordshire	550	46	732	62	614	52	731	61	+15	32%
Norfolk	396	44	444	49	432	48	439	48	+4	10%
Suffolk	348	46	323	43	308	40	296	39	-7	-15%
<b>East of England</b>	<b>3,104</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>3,979</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>4,155</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>4258</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>+18</b>	<b>36%</b>

Notes: see below.

Source: ONS, [Crime in England and Wales Police Force Area data tables](#), Table P6, 21 July 2022

## Knife or sharp instrument offences recorded by the police for selected offences<sup>1,2,3</sup>

Year ending March, England and Wales

	2018/19		2019/20		2020/21		2021/22		Change per 100,000, 2018/19 - 2021/22	
	Offences per 100,000		Offences per 100,000		Offences per 100,000		Offences per 100,000		Actual change	% change
	Number	population	Number	population	Number	population <sup>7</sup>	Number	population		
City of London	60	-	31	-	19	-	14	128	-	-
Metropolitan Police	13,819	154	14,685	165	10,131	113	11,108	124	-31	-20%
<b>London</b>	<b>13,879</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>14,716</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>10,150</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>11,122</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>-31</b>	<b>-20%</b>
Hampshire	813	41	758	38	676	34	1,277	64	+23	56%
Kent	955	51	729	39	573	31	1,255	67	+16	31%
Surrey <sup>5</sup>	464	39	454	38	501	42	456	38	-1	-2%
Sussex	923	54	1,154	68	912	53	967	56	+2	4%
Thames Valley	1,503	62	1,589	66	1,408	58	1,216	50	-12	-19%
<b>South East</b>	<b>4,658</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>4,684</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>4,070</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>5,171</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>+5</b>	<b>11%</b>
Avon and Somerset	1,227	71	1,330	78	1,154	67	1,265	73	+2	2%
Devon and Cornwall	662	37	776	44	685	39	721	40	+3	8%
Dorset	250	32	273	35	306	40	301	39	+6	20%
Gloucestershire	297	47	320	51	306	48	293	46	-1	-2%
Wiltshire	286	40	288	40	289	40	275	38	-2	-4%
<b>South West</b>	<b>2,722</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>2,987</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>2,740</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>2,855</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>+2</b>	<b>4%</b>

Notes: see below.

Source: ONS, [Crime in England and Wales Police Force Area data tables](#), Table P6, 21 July 2022

## Knife or sharp instrument offences recorded by the police for selected offences<sup>1,2,3</sup>

Year ending March, England and Wales

	2018/19		2019/20		2020/21		2021/22		Change per 100,000, 2018/19 - 2021/22	
	Offences per 100,000		Offences per 100,000		Offences per 100,000		Offences per 100,000		Actual change	% change
	Number	population	Number	population	Number	population <sup>7</sup>	Number	population		
Dyfed-Powys	149	29	174	34	145	28	180	34	+6	20%
Gwent	141	24	220	37	237	40	289	48	+25	104%
North Wales	268	38	277	40	268	38	339	48	+10	26%
South Wales	679	51	806	61	811	61	657	49	-2	-4%
<b>WALES</b>	<b>1237</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>1477</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>1461</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>1465</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>+7</b>	<b>18%</b>
<b>British Transport Police</b>	<b>197</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>224</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>276</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>305</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<i>ENGLAND AND WALES, including GMP<sup>6</sup></i>	<i>49,520</i>	<i>83</i>	<i>51,876</i>	<i>88</i>	<i>44,286</i>	<i>75</i>	<i>49,027</i>	<i>82</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1%</i>
<b>ENGLAND AND WALES, less GMP<sup>6</sup></b>	<b>46,351</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>48,684</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>41,259</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>45,391</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>-2</b>	<b>-3%</b>

Notes: (1) Other offences exist that are not shown in this table that may include the use of a knife or sharp instrument. (2) Data in the table include 20 forces (Avon and Somerset, Cambridgeshire, Cleveland, Cumbria, Derbyshire, Devon and Cornwall, Dyfed-Powys, Greater Manchester, Humberside, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Merseyside, Metropolitan, Northamptonshire, Nottinghamshire, South Wales, South Yorkshire, Sussex, West Midlands and West Yorkshire Police) who supplied data based on a new methodology (the National Data Quality Improvement Service) for identifying whether an offence included a knife or sharp instrument or not. These forces also supplied data on revised coverage and guidance for the collection. Previous data for these forces (excluding GMP) have been amended. Further forces will be moving to the new methodology in future releases. Further details can be found in a Methodological Report. (3) Forces who have made notable revisions to their data are: Avon and Somerset, Essex, Norfolk and Suffolk - data for recent years are not comparable prior to the year ending March 2018; Northumbria and Surrey - data for recent years are not comparable prior to the year ending March 2017; Thames Valley - data for recent years are not comparable prior to the year ending March 2016; Sussex - data for recent years are not comparable prior to the year ending March 2015. (4) Greater Manchester police reviewed their recording of knife or sharp instrument offences in December 2017. This revealed that they were under-counting these offences. Following this review, there has been a sharp increase in the number of knife or sharp instrument offences recorded by GMP in January to December 2018 compared with previous quarters. Previous data have not been revised and the data are therefore not comparable. (5) Data from Surrey Police, unlike other police forces, include unbroken bottle and glass offences. As such, this data is not directly comparable to data for other forces; however, it is not thought that offences of this kind constitute a large enough number to impact on the national figure. (6) Includes British Transport Police. (7) Calculated using mid-2019 population estimates from ONS.

Source: ONS, [Crime in England and Wales Police Force Area data tables](#), Table P6, 21 July 2022



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