



Garda Síochána Analysis Service

# KNIFE RELATED CRIME

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2015 - 2024

*Unless otherwise stated, data contained in this report is based upon operational figures from PULSE and is liable to change. Figures are based on the date incidents were reported and are correct as of 15/05/2025.*

## Introduction

‘Knife Crime’ is a component of certain crime incidents rather than an incident type in its own right. A knife can be used as a tool as well as a weapon involving threatened or actual violence. Knife related crime trends were identified on PULSE<sup>1</sup> based on the *Incident MO<sup>2</sup> Type ‘Weapon/Instrument Used’* with the *Sub-Type ‘Knife’*.

All incidents involving the use and/ or possession of a knife were examined. Crime counting rules are applied to all reported crime incident figures. Crime counting rules are not applied to the number of knives seized. The main focus of the report is on crime incident types whereby harm is inflicted or threatened against a person (Assault, Homicide and Robbery) rather than against property (such as, Criminal Damage and Burglary). Insight is also provided into the types of locations where these knife related crimes occur – on the street/in public places, in residential locations or in other commercial/retail etc. location types.

To provide additional insight when assessing trends, figures were obtained from the HSE Hospital In-Patient Enquiry (HIPE) system on the

number of discharges from hospitals nationwide following an assault by knife.

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<sup>1</sup> PULSE (Police Using Leading Systems Effectively) is the incident recording system used by the Garda Síochána nationwide.

<sup>2</sup> Modus Operandi or method of offending.

## Executive Summary

The total number of crime incidents in which a knife was used ranged from approximately 1,100 to 1,400 incidents per year between 2015 and 2022. In the last two years, changes in data recording practices have increased those numbers and allow for improved data insights on possession of knives as offensive weapons. The count of knives seized during 2024 (2,172) was similar to 2023 and in 2022. Record high numbers of knife seizures were recorded in 2020 in line with extraordinary levels of proactive policing during the Covid pandemic. The number of criminal proceedings (charges/summonses issued) for knife possession offences has increased from just over 1,600 in 2015 to just under 2,000 in 2024.

The number of Assault causing Harm incidents where a knife was used has trended upward since 2016, in line with an overall increase in Assaults, and was highest in 2022 at 337 such incidents. There have been slight decreases in 2023 and 2024. The overall proportion of Assaults causing Harm which involved the use of a knife has, however, declined from just over 7% in 2015 to just over 5% in 2024. Approximately 50% of all incidents of Assaults causing Harm where a knife was used occur in residential locations.

Whilst volumes are much lower, 2022 also marked a peak period in terms of incidents of Murder/ Manslaughter where a knife was used (15 reported incidents). The overall proportion of Murder/ Manslaughter incidents where a knife was used has averaged around 27% over the last ten years. Aligned to this, the majority of these incidents also occur in residential locations (>60%).

Robbery from an Establishment/ Institution and from the Person where a knife was used has been trending downward over the ten year period in line with an overall reduction in robberies. Volumes dropped substantially in 2020 and 2021 and whilst they have increased since, they remain below pre-pandemic levels. The overall proportion of these Robberies which involved the use of a knife has been quite consistent at between 26% and 30% every year except 2020. At least 40% of these Robberies each year occur in retail locations and at least another 28% occur on the street/ in open spaces.

Data provided by the HSE shows 213 inpatients discharged from hospitals following an Assault by Knife during 2023. This was the highest count over a ten year period. In 2024, the number of in-patient discharges reduced to 170, a notable decrease on 2023.

## Incidents with Knife Used MO

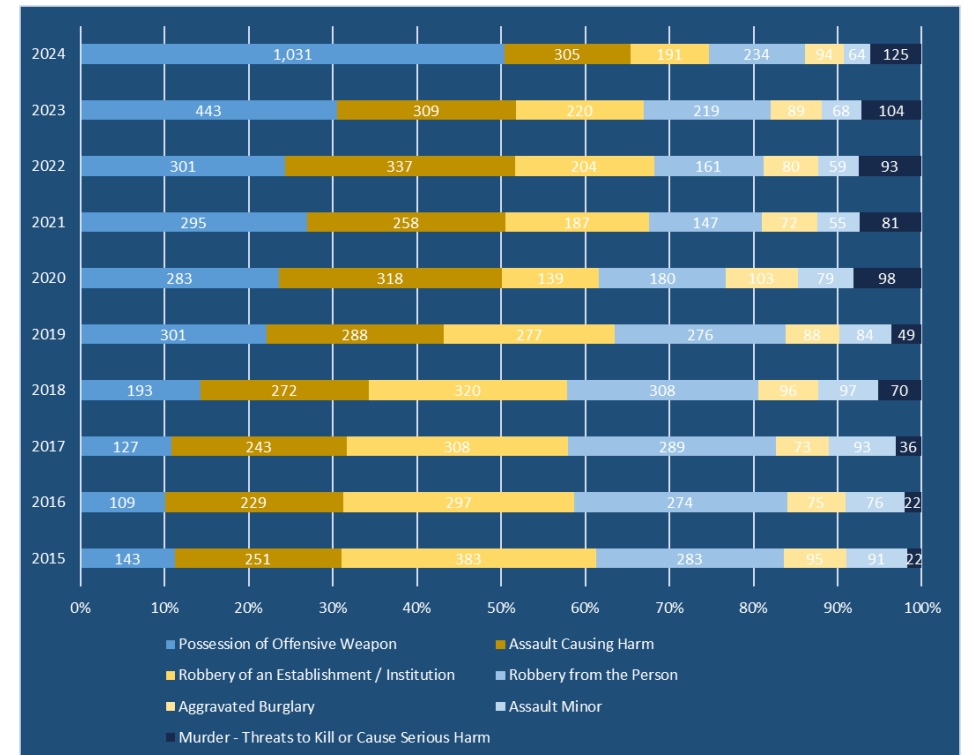
The total number of crime incidents in which a knife was used was ranged from approximately 1,100 to 1,400 incidents per year between 2015 and 2022. In 2023, there was an increase to almost 1,600 and then a further increase to just over 2,200 incidents in 2024. The majority of these recent increases are due to changes in data recording practices which are explained in detail in this section.

The incident types with the highest recorded volumes of knives used in each year are shown in the chart below. Possession of an Offensive Weapon is prominent in recent years; as these are primary incidents, they reflect people carrying knives only, there was no other crime discovered as part of the same occurrence. These incidents will be driven by searches and proactive policing activity.

The notable increase in Possession of an Offensive Weapon with a knife used between 2023 and 2024 is attributed to a new data quality process implemented by the Garda Information Services Centre<sup>3</sup> (GISC) in October 2023 which has increased the frequency of recording of the Knife Used MO. This allows us to more readily determine when a knife (as

opposed to other types of non-firearm) was the offensive weapon being carried.

Highest Volume Incident Types with Knife Used MO (2015-2024)

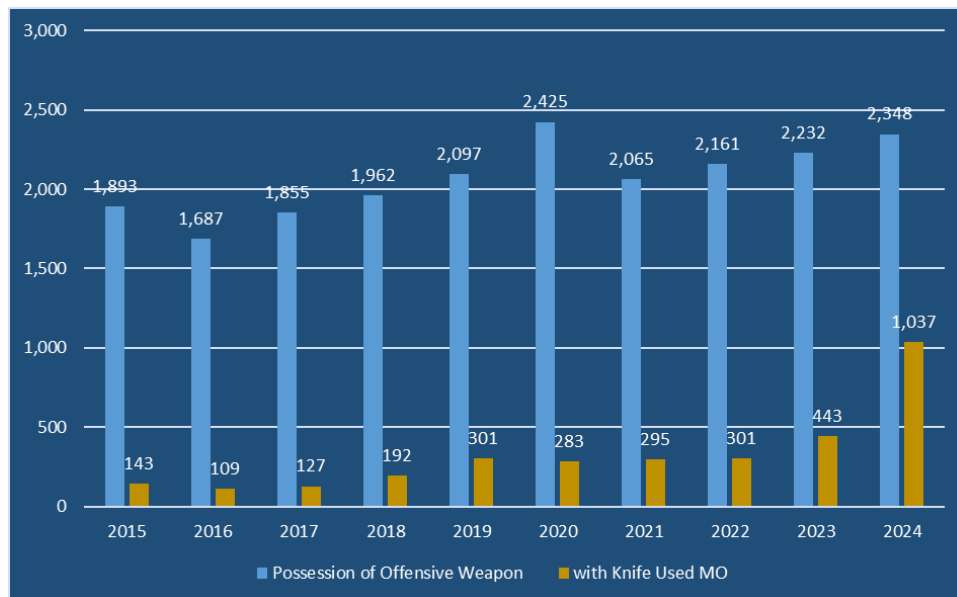


To verify the increase was driven by the changes in data recording practice, the overall levels of Possession Offensive Weapons incidents

<sup>3</sup> GISC personnel are responsible for the creation of incident records on the PULSE database.

were also examined. As can be seen in the chart below, there is no related increase in the annual count of incidents of Possession of Offensive Weapon (note the light blue columns remain relatively stable across the period, peaking in 2020). There was also no related increase in the annual count of knives being seized by Gardaí (see details later in the report). The increase is therefore attributable to the change in recording practice and the numbers from 2024 onwards representing a shift in the data series which limits comparability to previous years.

**Possession of Offensive Weapon Incidents – Overall and with Knife Used (2015-2024)**



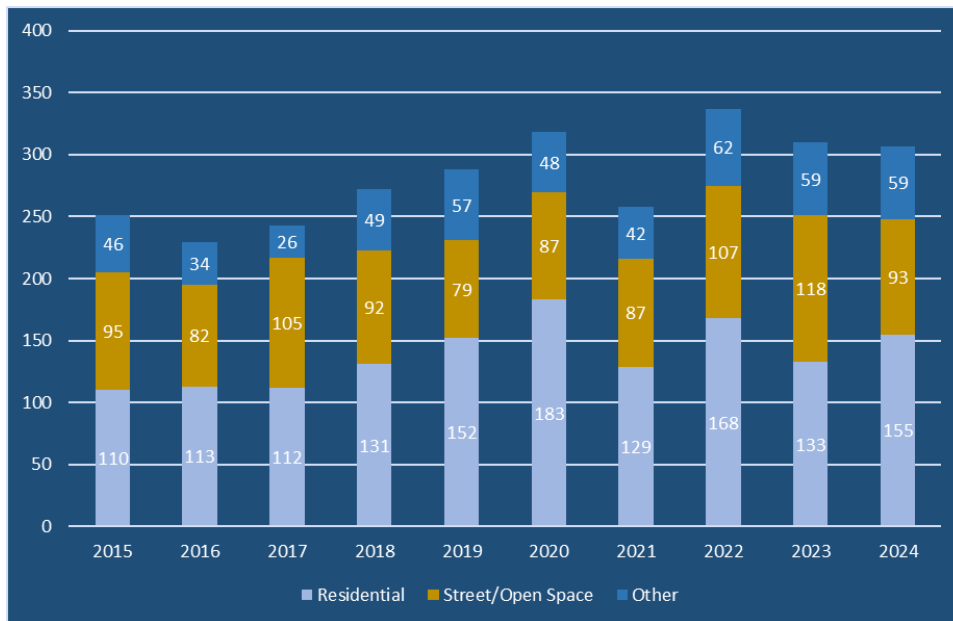
Over the ten year period, it is evident that the number of Robberies, both of an Establishment/Institution and from the Person, involving the use of a knife has generally declined, this reflects overall decreases in these incidents. When considering Murder – Threats to Kill or Cause Serious Harm, the last five years have generally seen higher volumes involving the use of knives when compared to 2015 to 2019. In 2024, there were 125 incidents of Threats to Kill or Cause Serious Harm involving knives. For full details of other incident types where a knife was used please refer to the table in Appendix One.

The following sections of the report examine where knives have been used in committing other criminal offences involving actual or threatened violence against people, as opposed to property. Three groupings are examined; Assault causing Harm, Murder/ Manslaughter, and Robberies from an Establishment/ Institution combined with Robberies from the Person. The location types of these incidents involving knives are presented in broad categories; residential, on the street/ open spaces and in other locations which include commercial/ retail premises.

## Assault causing Harm

The annual count of reported incidents of Assault causing Harm has been overall upward trending over the ten year period from around 3,500 incidents in 2015 to just under 5,800 in 2024 (peaking at just over 6,000 in 2022). The proportion of incidents whereby a knife was used, however, has been decreasing, from just over 7% of all Assault causing Harm incidents in 2015 to slightly over 5% in 2024 (also peaking in 2022 at 7.5%).

Assault causing Harm with Knife Used by Location Group (2015-2024)



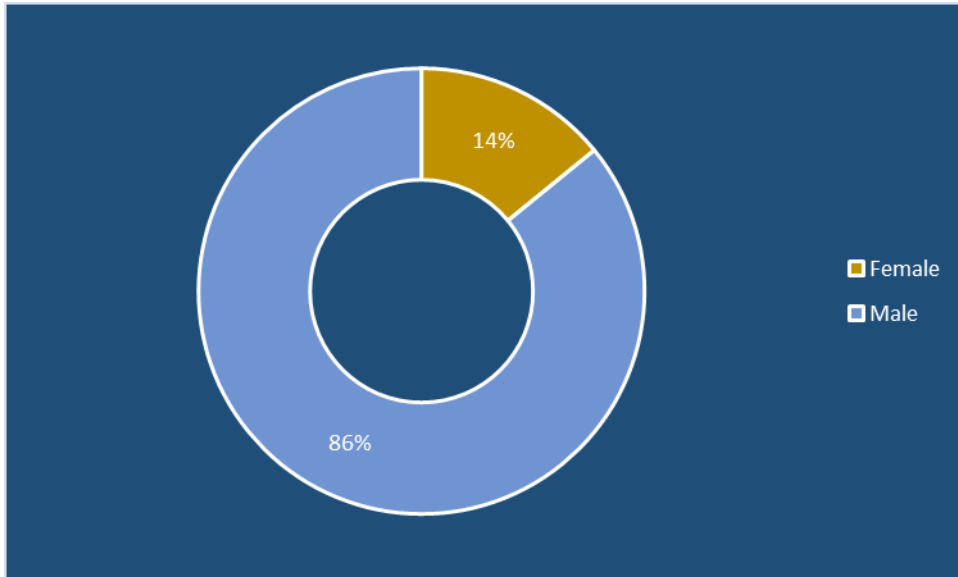
Despite a proportionate decrease, the actual count of Assault causing Harm involving the use of a knife peaked in 2022 at 337 incidents. This has since reduced to 307 incidents during 2024 in line with an overall decrease in the Assault causing Harm incident type.

Over the ten year period between 43% and 58% of Assault causing Harm incidents involving a knife occurred in residential locations. The number of such incidents were notably increasing between 2015 and 2020. Incidents occurring on the street/ open spaces were higher during 2022 and 2023 but otherwise quite stable in volume over the ten year period including 2024.

An analysis of Suspected Offenders for incidents of Assault causing Harm involving knives, indicates that 18-34 years is the most prominent age cohort (57%) and Male offenders accounted for 86% of all detected incidents.

Suspected Offender Age	u18 years	18-34 years	35-49 years	50+ years
Assault Causing Harm	9%	57%	27%	7%

Suspected Offenders for Assault causing Harm with Knife Used (2015-2024)

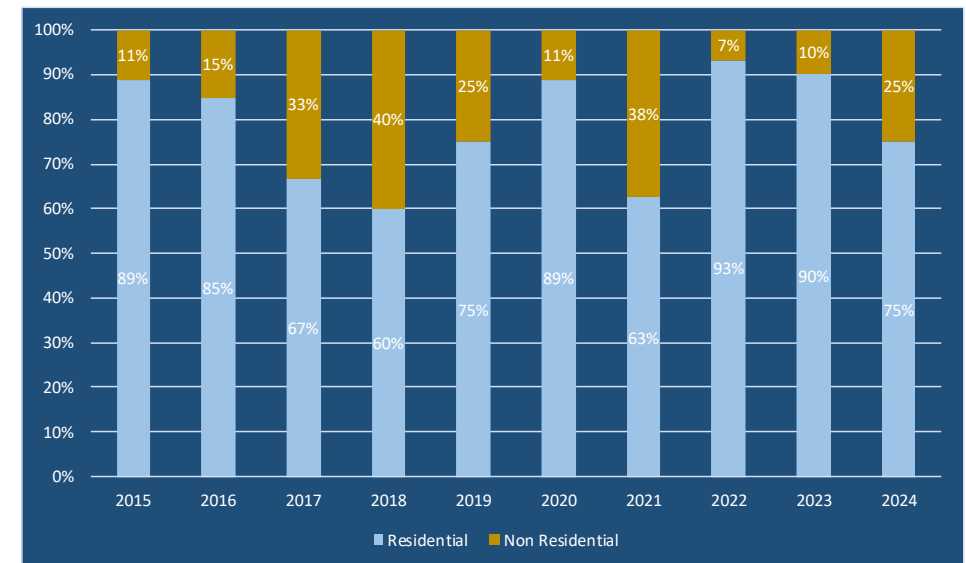


## Murder/ Manslaughter

Murder/ Manslaughter are relatively low volume incidents compared to the other incidents presented in this report but are included given their seriousness. The annual count of reported incidents of Murder/ Manslaughter has remained quite stable with lower volumes reported in 2019 to 2021 inclusive, two of these years being partially influenced by the Covid pandemic and related restrictions.

The proportion of incidents whereby a knife was used is substantially higher than was seen in Assaults causing Harm. Over the ten year period the proportion of Murder/ Manslaughter in which a knife was used, averaged around 27% of reported incidents. While the number of incidents of Murder/ Manslaughter with a knife used reported during 2022 (15) was the highest over the ten year period, this count reduced during 2023 and 2024 in tandem with slightly lower overall Murder/ Manslaughter incidents.

Murder/ Manslaughter with Knife Used by Location Group (2015-2024)



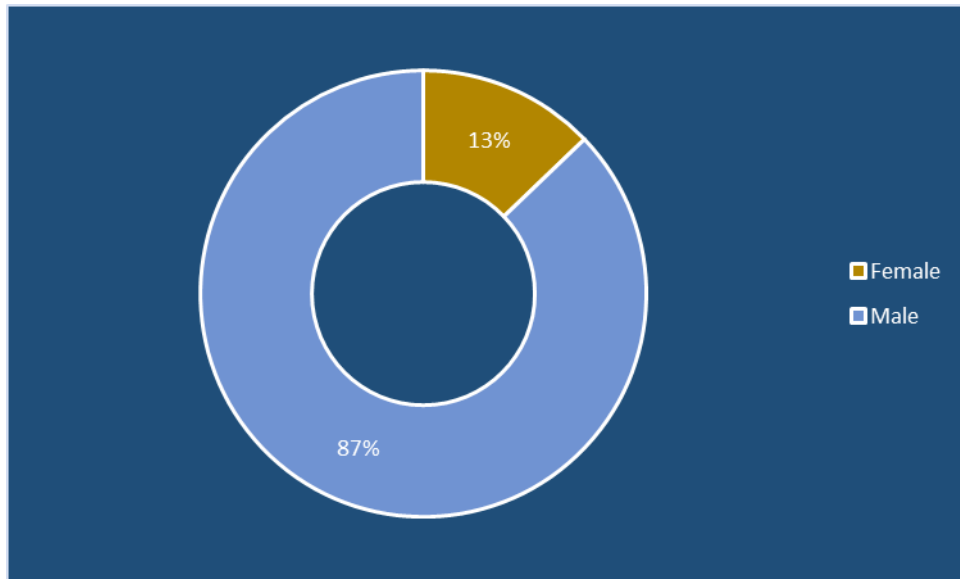
As shown in the chart above, over the ten year period the majority of Murder/ Manslaughter incidents involving a knife occurred in residential

locations. Caution is advised in relation to these figures as proportions are based on low underlying counts.

An analysis of Suspected Offenders for incidents of Murder/ Manslaughter involving knives, indicates that 18-34 years is the most prominent age cohort (50%) and Male Offenders accounted for 87% of all detected incidents.

Suspected Offender Age	u18 years	18-34 years	35-49 years	50+ years
Murder/ Manslaughter	7%	50%	36%	7%

Suspected Offenders for Murder/ Manslaughter with Knife Used (2015-2024)



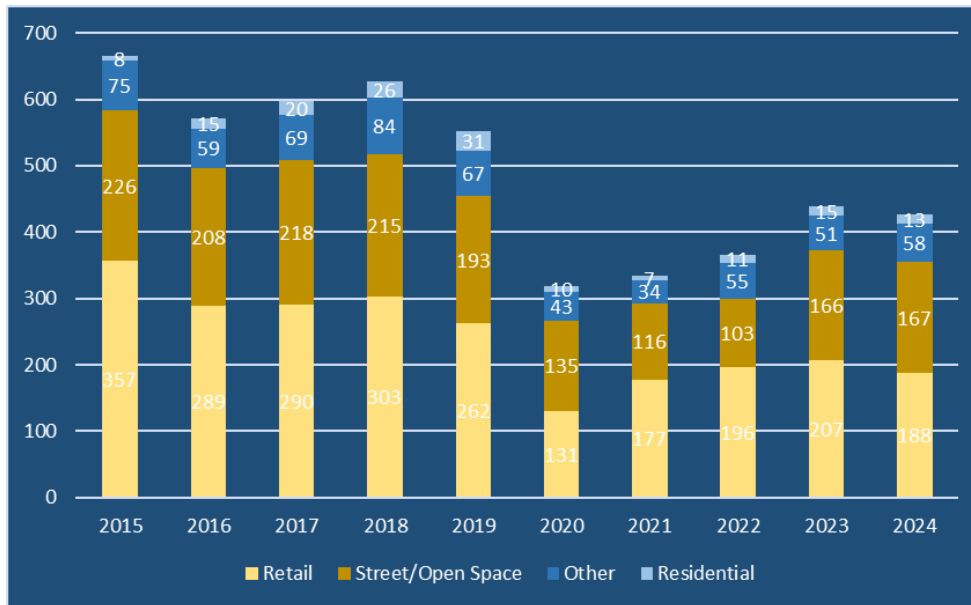
## Robbery

The annual count of reported incidents of Robbery from the Person and Robbery from an Establishment/ Institution (hereafter simply referred to as Robbery) has been downward trending over the ten year period. Generally, higher levels of Robbery were evident from 2015 to 2019 with levels typically over 2,000 per year (2015 being the highest with just over 2,400 incidents). Robberies reduced substantially during 2020 and 2021 with restrictions related to the Covid pandemic. Between 2020 and 2024 the number of Robbery incidents has ranged from just under 1,200 incidents in 2021 to just over 1,600 incidents in 2023. In 2024, there was a slight reduction to just over 1,500 incidents reported.

The proportion of incidents whereby a knife was used, however, has been stable within the 26% to 30% range over the past ten years (excluding 2020) and most recently at 28% of incidents reported during 2024. The largest proportion of Robberies involving the use of knives occur in retail locations, ranging from between 42% and 54% over the ten year period. Sizeable but lower proportions, ranging from 28% to 42% over the ten years, occurred on the Street/ Open Spaces.



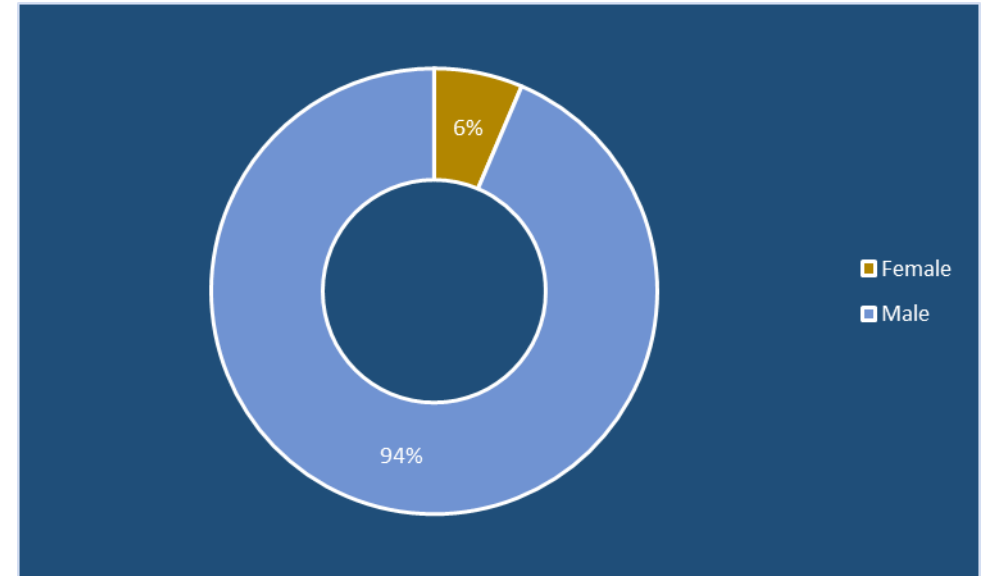
Robbery with Knife Used by Location Group (2015-2024)



An analysis of Suspected Offenders for incidents of Robbery involving knives, indicates that 18-34 years is the most prominent cohort (56%) and Male Offenders accounted for 94% of all detected incidents. Robbery involving knives also shows the highest proportion of child offenders (those aged under 18 years) at 18%.

Suspected Offender Age	u18 years	18-34 years	35-49 years	50+ years
Robbery	18%	56%	24%	2%

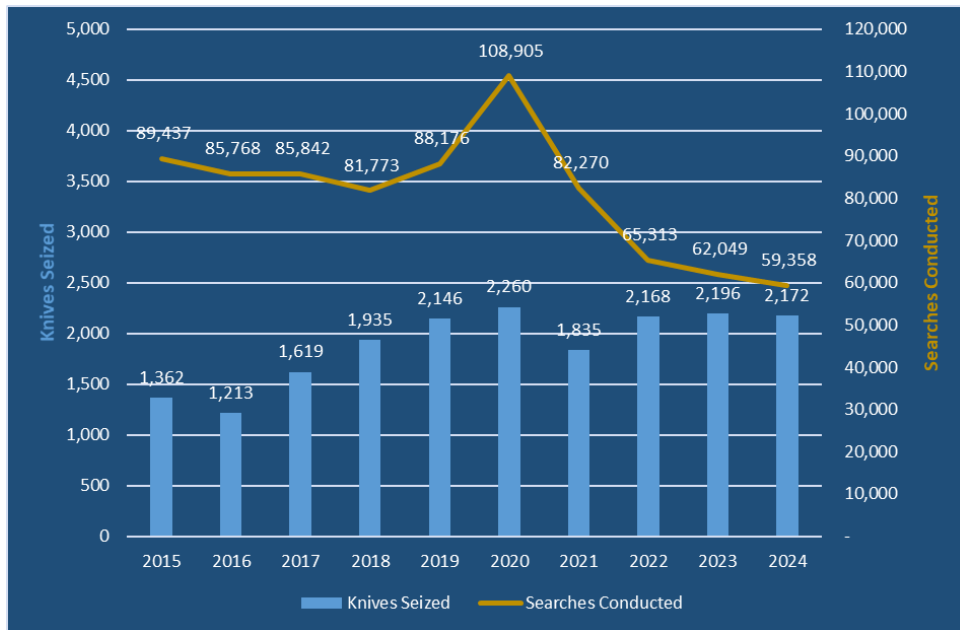
Suspected Offenders for Robbery with Knife Used (2015-2024)



## Knives Seized and Searches Conducted

Excepting the extraordinary proactive policing activity of the pandemic, the number of knives seized annually during 2023 and 2024 (2,196 and 2,172 respectively) remains closely in line with the number of knives seized immediately pre-pandemic in 2019 (2,146). The increase in the number of knives seized in 2017 and 2018 in particular, was driven in part by the implementation of the Property and Exhibits Management System (PEMS) during 2016 which introduced electronic recording and tracking of items, replacing the traditional property book.

Knives Seized and Searches Conducted (2015-2024)

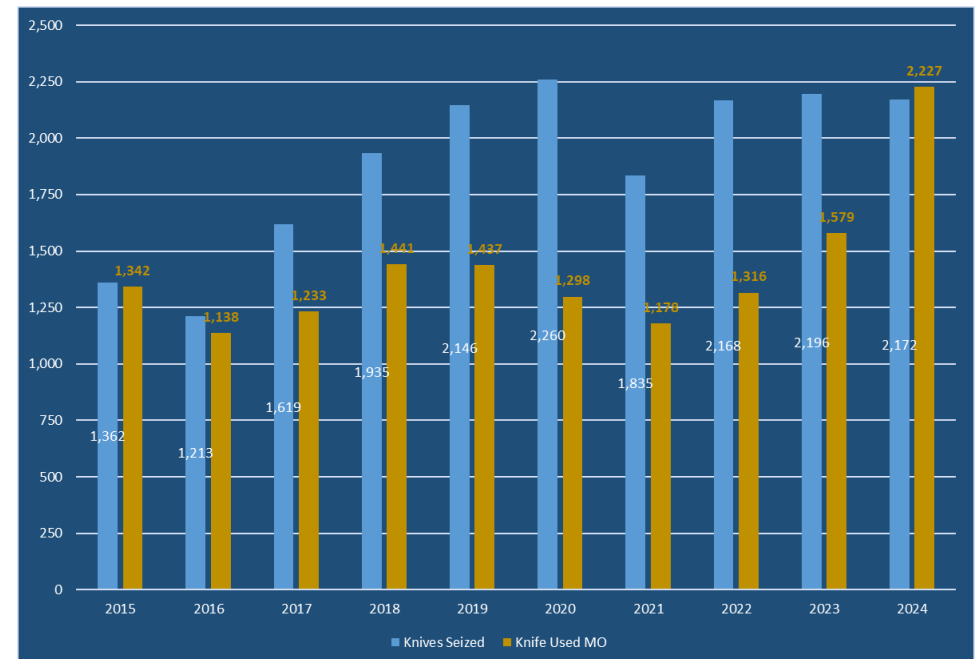


When comparing the trends in Knives Seized and Searches Conducted, it can be seen that despite reductions in the number of searches since the exceptional peak related to the pandemic in 2020, the number of knives seized has remained generally stable. For details of knives seized and searches conducted across all Garda Regions and Divisions, please refer to the tables in Appendices Two and Three.

## Knives Seized and Knife Used MO

Between 2015 and 2022, there was a moderate positive correlation between the trend in Knives Seized and the trend for the recording of the Knife Used MO in PULSE. Since 2023, however, the annual count of Knife Used MO being recorded has increased substantially while the annual count of Knives Seized has remained stable. As referenced earlier in the report, this increase in the Knife Used MO has been driven by a change in data recording, particularly across the Possession of an Offensive Weapon incident type.

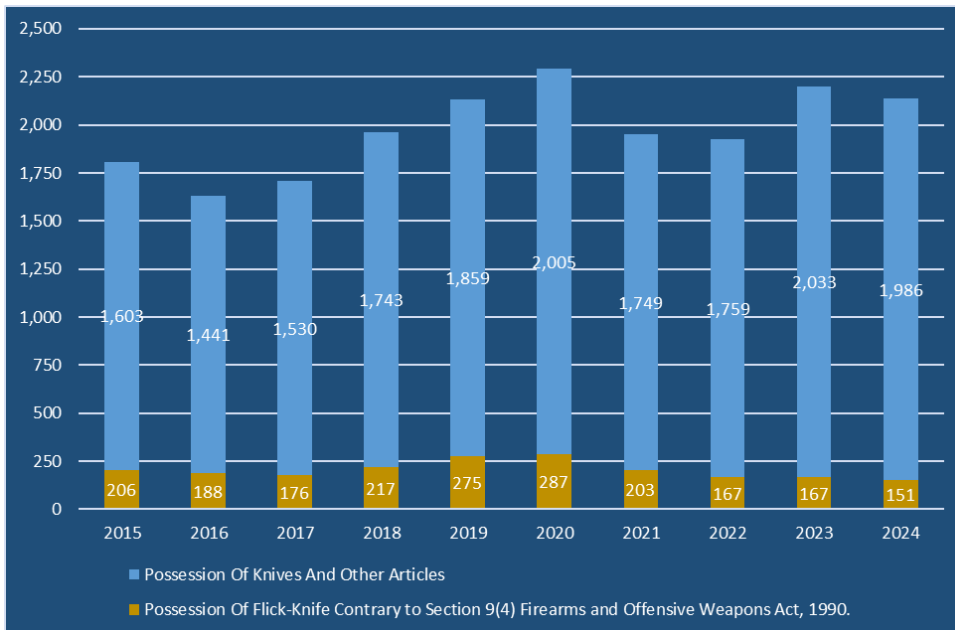
Knives Seized and Knife Used MO (2015-2024)



## Knife Related Proceedings

To examine criminal proceedings initiated specifically relating to carrying a knife, all charges/summonses issued for two specific offences were analysed. The two offences are ‘Possession of Knives and Other Articles’ and ‘Possession of Flick-Knife Contrary to Section 9(4) Firearms and Offensive Weapons Act, 1990’.

Knife Related Proceedings – Charges and Summonses Issued by Offence (2015-2024)



To date, the highest number of charges/summonses issued over the ten year period related to incidents reported in 2020, the same year as the highest number of knives seized.

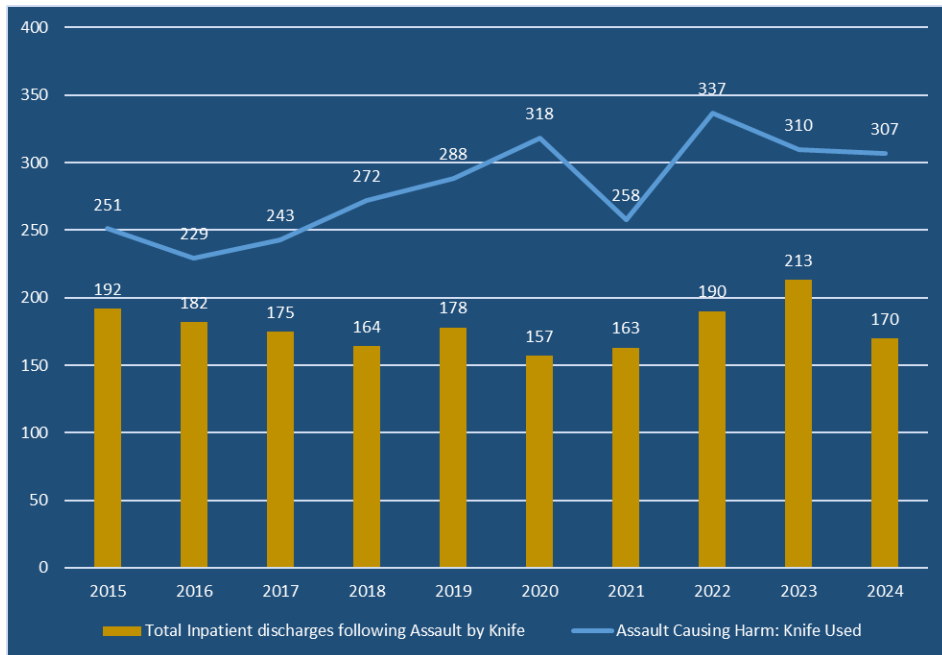
Prosecutions for the offence of ‘Possession of Knives and Other Articles’ peaked in volume at 2,033 during 2023 (previous high of 2,005 occurred during the pandemic in 2020) but reduced slightly in during 2024. Prosecutions for the offence of ‘Possession of Flick-Knife’ are overall lower in volume and have been downward trending between 2020 and 2024 with 2024 marking a ten year low of 151 proceedings. This may be more reflective of changes in the types of knives being carried and seized as there has been no reduction in proceedings overall.

It is important to note that these figures are based on the date the original incident was reported. As some investigations may still be ongoing for more recent incidents, particularly those reported in 2024, proceedings figures will increase over time. It is also important to note that there are other types of sanction which may have been administered, such as, a referral to the youth diversion programme.

## HSE Data

Data was supplied by the HSE Healthcare Pricing Office (HPO) which provided an annual count of Hospital In-patient Discharges following an Assault by Knife for the 2015 to 2024 period. The count of 213 recorded for 2023 was the highest over a ten year period though the annual count decreased substantially (to 170) during 2024.

**HSE Hospital In-patient Discharges following Assault by Knife and Reported Assaults causing Harm with Knife Used MO (2015-2024)**



Source: HSE HIPE and PULSE Data

The chart above shows the total number of hospital discharges each year according to HSE data along with the total number of Assault causing Harm incidents reported each year where a knife was used based on PULSE data.

HIPE data also indicated that injured parties were 87% male and 6% were aged under 18 at the time of discharge from hospital.

*Notes in relation to HIPE Data: In-patient and day case discharges are reported only; Emergency Department and out-patient attendances are not recorded on HIPE. HIPE data is based on hospitalisations which may include multiple admissions for the same patient. Therefore, it is not possible to use HIPE to examine certain parameters such as the number of hospital encounters per patient, or to estimate incidence or prevalence of disease. Diagnosis and Procedures are coded using ICD-10-AM/ACHI/ACS (From 2024 the 12th edition is used). ICD-10-AM is the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems, Tenth Revision, Australian Modification.*

## Appendix One - Incidents with Knife Used MO

The table shows the number of incidents by type reported in each year which had the knife used MO recorded. As noted in the main report, the increase in the number of Possession of Offensive Weapons incidents involving the use of knives in 2024 is due to changes in data recording practices in GISC introduced in October 2023.

Incident Type	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Possession of Offensive Weapon	143	109	127	193	301	283	295	301	443	1,031
Assault Causing Harm	251	229	243	272	288	318	258	337	309	305
Robbery of an Establishment / Institution	383	297	308	320	277	139	187	204	220	191
Robbery from the Person	283	274	289	308	276	180	147	161	219	234
Aggravated Burglary	95	75	73	96	88	103	72	80	89	94
Assault Minor	91	76	93	97	84	79	55	59	68	64
Murder - Threats to Kill or Cause Serious Harm	22	22	36	70	49	98	81	93	104	125
Hijacking Unlawful Seizure of a vehicle/aircraft/vessel	11	*	10	20	21	29	29	11	25	34
Criminal Damage (Not by Fire)	16	17	*	13	*	*	*	10	15	46
Murder	*	10	*	11	*	10	*	15	11	*
False Imprisonment	*	*	*	*	*	12	*	15	11	*
Affray/Riot/Violent Disorder	*	0	0	*	*	*	*	*	16	17
Assault / Obstruction / Resist Arrest - Peace Officer	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	10	*
Murder - Attempt	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
<i>Others (39 incident types)</i>	<i>27</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>27</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>14</i>	<i>32</i>	<i>56</i>

*\*Less than 10 incidents.*

## Appendix Two - Knives Seized by Garda Region and Division

Region/Division	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
<b>Dublin Region</b>	<b>620</b>	<b>548</b>	<b>680</b>	<b>900</b>	<b>963</b>	<b>1,005</b>	<b>812</b>	<b>914</b>	<b>1,024</b>	<b>1,054</b>
D.M.R. Eastern	32	35	31	66	77	76	51	55	46	47
D.M.R. North Central	144	98	168	189	185	203	188	201	287	325
D.M.R. Northern	96	86	113	185	170	151	126	212	187	189
D.M.R. South Central	144	128	176	195	208	257	187	204	238	256
D.M.R. Southern	85	100	72	96	129	134	93	83	113	84
D.M.R. Western	119	101	120	169	194	184	167	159	153	153
<b>Eastern Region</b>	<b>286</b>	<b>243</b>	<b>302</b>	<b>371</b>	<b>354</b>	<b>425</b>	<b>335</b>	<b>429</b>	<b>402</b>	<b>333</b>
Kildare	25	32	46	64	52	73	45	57	60	57
Laois/Offaly	29	35	49	71	47	59	71	85	51	35
Meath/Westmeath	61	47	67	72	98	92	60	72	89	78
Waterford/Kilkenny/Carlow	62	68	79	99	85	117	100	110	129	74
Wexford/Wicklow	109	61	61	65	72	84	59	105	73	89
<b>North Western Region</b>	<b>197</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>271</b>	<b>299</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>386</b>	<b>291</b>	<b>438</b>	<b>368</b>	<b>336</b>
Donegal	24	17	31	28	43	46	40	42	55	49
Galway	38	42	76	49	89	84	70	105	93	83
Louth/Cavan/Monaghan	67	74	80	117	163	140	106	211	135	112
Mayo/Roscommon/Longford	41	42	41	63	117	65	47	61	54	53
Sligo/Leitrim	27	21	43	42	38	51	28	19	31	39
<b>Southern Region</b>	<b>259</b>	<b>226</b>	<b>366</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>379</b>	<b>444</b>	<b>397</b>	<b>387</b>	<b>402</b>	<b>449</b>
Clare/Tipperary	55	39	79	72	75	96	71	61	98	72
Cork City	65	67	97	101	121	172	118	129	100	126
Cork County	39	27	62	67	72	62	79	77	51	61
Kerry	21	26	26	39	37	28	35	39	39	44
Limerick	79	67	102	86	74	86	94	81	114	146
<b>National Total</b>	<b>1,362</b>	<b>1,213</b>	<b>1,619</b>	<b>1,935</b>	<b>2,146</b>	<b>2,260</b>	<b>1,835</b>	<b>2,168</b>	<b>2,196</b>	<b>2,172</b>

## Appendix Three - Searches Conducted by Garda Region and Division

Region/Division	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
<b>Dublin Region</b>	<b>51,848</b>	<b>46,308</b>	<b>43,628</b>	<b>40,428</b>	<b>44,982</b>	<b>51,831</b>	<b>35,749</b>	<b>30,934</b>	<b>31,637</b>	<b>30,687</b>
D.M.R. Eastern	1,072	1,138	1,660	1,436	1,701	3,034	2,376	1,716	1,652	1,201
D.M.R. North Central	18,366	6,453	7,676	11,267	10,400	9,951	7,731	8,184	7,575	9,407
D.M.R. Northern	7,363	8,551	6,402	6,193	9,783	11,032	7,005	5,585	6,122	5,757
D.M.R. South Central	7,069	4,585	4,172	3,683	3,522	4,751	3,751	4,093	4,459	3,646
D.M.R. Southern	4,771	6,700	5,701	4,659	4,886	6,805	4,866	4,134	3,946	3,099
D.M.R. Western	13,207	18,881	18,017	13,190	14,690	16,258	10,020	7,222	7,883	7,577
<b>Eastern Region</b>	<b>12,340</b>	<b>15,207</b>	<b>15,455</b>	<b>15,310</b>	<b>16,771</b>	<b>20,451</b>	<b>16,554</b>	<b>13,016</b>	<b>11,635</b>	<b>10,955</b>
Kildare	1,370	1,953	2,344	2,822	3,561	3,631	3,334	3,276	2,115	1,839
Laois/Offaly	1,386	1,790	2,206	2,160	2,265	3,202	2,581	2,249	1,944	2,113
Meath/Westmeath	2,254	3,443	3,493	2,736	3,254	3,737	2,895	1,893	1,930	2,107
Waterford/Kilkenny/Carlow	3,070	3,498	3,348	3,711	3,490	5,096	4,410	3,279	3,331	2,982
Wexford/Wicklow	4,260	4,523	4,064	3,881	4,201	4,785	3,334	2,319	2,315	1,914
<b>North Western Region</b>	<b>7,929</b>	<b>8,764</b>	<b>8,668</b>	<b>8,881</b>	<b>10,153</b>	<b>13,759</b>	<b>9,873</b>	<b>7,160</b>	<b>7,177</b>	<b>7,179</b>
Donegal	775	893	871	824	1,187	1,790	1,212	734	761	735
Galway	2,448	2,328	2,265	1,911	1,790	2,033	1,457	1,536	2,023	1,743
Louth/Cavan/Monaghan	2,027	2,792	3,052	3,797	4,792	6,171	4,175	3,003	2,328	1,966
Mayo/Roscommon/Longford	1,710	1,894	1,739	1,540	1,562	2,458	2,066	1,169	1,369	1,891
Sligo/Leitrim	969	857	741	809	822	1,307	963	718	696	844
<b>Southern Region</b>	<b>17,320</b>	<b>15,489</b>	<b>18,091</b>	<b>17,154</b>	<b>16,270</b>	<b>22,864</b>	<b>20,094</b>	<b>14,203</b>	<b>11,600</b>	<b>10,537</b>
Clare/Tipperary	4,295	3,838	4,595	3,953	3,731	5,455	5,275	3,532	2,956	2,287
Cork City	4,717	3,818	4,793	4,823	4,528	6,616	6,208	4,005	2,608	2,645
Cork County	2,188	2,371	3,201	2,803	3,093	4,422	3,193	2,614	2,169	2,030
Kerry	1,705	1,664	1,814	1,780	1,501	1,903	1,321	1,133	1,024	1,020
Limerick	4,415	3,798	3,688	3,795	3,417	4,468	4,097	2,919	2,843	2,555
<b>National</b>	<b>89,437</b>	<b>85,768</b>	<b>85,842</b>	<b>81,773</b>	<b>88,176</b>	<b>108,905</b>	<b>82,270</b>	<b>65,313</b>	<b>62,049</b>	<b>59,358</b>