Fiosrú | Oifig an Ombudsman Póilíneachta | Office of the Police Ombudsman

Referrals to Fiosrú

Incidents of death and serious harm 2025

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List of Abbreviations

CBD	Capacity Based Driving
DIU	Digital Investigations Unit
DMR	Dublin Metropolitan Region
DPP	Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions
ECHR	European Convention on Human Rights
GSOC	Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission
FLO	Family Liaison Officer
RTI	Road Traffic Incident
SDO	Senior Designated Officer
SSU	Specialist Services Unit

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Police Ombudsman Foreword

Independent investigations into death or serious injury incidents involving garda contact play an important role in preserving and enhancing trust in An Garda Síochána.

By law, any matter where a garda's action or inaction may have resulted in a person's death or serious harm must be referred by An Garda Síochána to Fiosrú, the Office of the Police Ombudsman. Fiosrú's role as Ireland's civilian police oversight body is to investigate what happened, regardless of whether or not someone has made a complaint.

By independently examining the facts and gathering evidence, Fiosrú's investigations play an important role in protecting people's human rights, delivering accountability and ensuring the public can have confidence in policing. If there has been a fatality, we must give particular consideration to the State's obligation under Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights which protects the right to life.

This is Fiosrú's second annual report documenting details of referred incidents involving contact with gardaí where a person died or was seriously injured. It shows that my office opened independent investigations on foot of a total of 39 referrals from An Garda Síochána in 2025, two more than in 2024. These 39 referred incidents sadly involved the deaths of 20 people and serious harm of a further 24.

Incidents involving serious injuries or the loss of human life have an outsized impact on families, victims and gardaí themselves. I am acutely conscious that every single death is a human tragedy with loved ones left behind and seeking answers.

As this report documents, incidents of death or serious harm involving contact with gardaí can arise in a range of different circumstances. These often reflect the frontline role of gardaí in protecting the public and dealing with crime. Our gardaí also have a range of exceptional powers, including the power to detain individuals against their will and to drive vehicles outside of the normal rules which apply to other road users.

Fiosrú aims to respond proportionately to all referrals based on the unique circumstances of each incident. This may involve the rapid response of our 24 hour on-call investigative teams to the scene of an incident on a road side or in a garda cell. In such circumstances, our investigative work may involve gathering forensic evidence and interviewing witnesses and injured parties. Our investigators are often accompanied by family liaison specialists, all of whom are trained in trauma-informed practice. Not all referrals require immediate or time sensitive responses, and in such investigations we adapt our approach accordingly.

While this is only Fiosrú's second year of detailed reporting on referred incidents of death and serious harm, certain trends are already emerging. In both 2025 and 2024, road traffic incidents were the referral category which accounted for the highest number of deaths and injuries.

In 2025, three people died and 11 were injured arising from a total of nine referred road traffic incidents. Six of these incidents were pursuit-related, including four which involved young men suspected of dangerous driving.

In recent months there has been considerable public discussion and debate about whether existing laws, policies and training relating to garda pursuits are sufficient to protect both gardaí and the public in such dynamic policing situations whilst also appropriately managing risk. This is an important conversation, and one that is vital in a society which is policed by consent.

Emily Logan

Police Ombudsman



Fiosrú has itself previously recommended the introduction of a training programme for gardaí with driver competencies who are authorised to conduct vehicle pursuits. The recommendations, made in 2022, included that "training should equip those conducting, authorising or managing vehicle pursuits to make decisions within the framework of the Garda Decision Making Model that are lawful, justified and necessary in the circumstances, proportionate to the perceived risk, and the least intrusive option available."

If in future a new and special threshold of legal culpability is introduced for gardaí in our roads traffic legislation, then this is the standard which Fiosrú's investigators will use in deciding whether to send investigation reports to the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Sadly, mental health-related incidents and the usage of drugs and alcohol were also recurring factors in garda referrals received by Fiosrú in 2025. These factors were recorded as apparent in 64% of incidents in the year under review, down from 78% in 2024. This pattern is concerning, but it is unfortunately not new. When the needs of vulnerable people in crisis are not met by other services, they will inevitably come into contact with gardaí as first responders. This diverts garda resources from core policing, drawing attention to the ongoing need for concerted action across agencies to ensure appropriate support services are available and to help preventable injuries and deaths.

A notable new dimension to this year's report is the inclusion of two new categories of referrals which reflect the expanded statutory definition of "serious harm" under the Policing, Security and Community Safety Act 2024, which entered into force in April 2025.

Serious harm by law now goes beyond general physical injuries resulting from a garda act or omission to include someone being the victim of a sexual offence or an abuse of power for a sexual purpose.

A sexual offence includes rape, sexual assault and other offences of a sexual nature. Abuse of power for a sexual purpose is any behaviour by a garda which takes advantage of their position to misuse their position, authority or powers for a sexual purpose or an improper emotional relationship with any other person. This legal definition recognises that there is always an implicit power imbalance in any interaction between gardaí and the public.

That these two new elements of serious harm are now referrable matters reflects a recognition that while anyone can be the victim of such abuse, there is growing concern, both domestically and globally, about violence against women and girls.

Referrals of this nature will enable Fiosrú to respond to the clear vulnerability of women and men where a garda is suspected of a sexual offence or an abuse of power for a sexual purpose against a member of the public or another garda. I hope that the new provisions provide clarity to referring gardaí over the types of matters that should be referred to Fiosrú for investigation. For Fiosrú, referrals involving victims of a sexual offence or an abuse of power for a sexual purpose sit within our wider specialist support work for investigations related to domestic, sexual, and gender-based violence.

As the two new types of serious harm entered into law in April 2025, such incidents were only referrable for nine months of the year under review in this report. In total, Fiosrú received five garda referrals related to sexual offences and one related to abuse of power for a sexual purpose. Three of the victims in referred incidents were serving gardaí. This compares to a total of five public complaints received during the year where alleged abuse of power for a sexual purpose was a factor.

While these numbers may be small, such incidents can have a significant impact on victims as well as wider potential damage to societal trust in policing.

Abuse of power for a sexual purpose is increasingly recognised as a problem that faces police services worldwide, including in our neighbouring jurisdictions. However, what it actually is and what it looks like may not be widely understood, even by victims who may not recognise themselves as such.

Abuse of power for a sexual purpose is not a specific criminal offence in Ireland, although it could include conduct which may amount to other criminal offences. In future this may include a new offence of misconduct in public office, the creation of which the Law Reform Commission is currently examining.

My hope is that in the years ahead the new statutory referral and investigation mechanism for incidents of this kind will play an important part in raising awareness and recognition among both victims and gardaí of this abusive behaviour with a view to encouraging reporting and reducing its prevalence.

Executive Summary

Introduction

Section 203 of the Policing, Security and Community Safety Act 2024 requires An Garda Síochána to refer to Fiosrú all matters where the act or omission of a garda may have resulted in the death of or serious harm of a person. Section 208 provides for Fiosrú to undertake an independent investigation on foot of section 203 referrals. Under section 209, Fiosrú investigators have all the powers of gardaí for the purposes of an investigation. These statutory provisions entered into force on 2 April 2025, replacing the relevant sections of the Garda Síochána Act 2005.

This report sets out the statistics and key findings relating to an analysis of a total of 39 referrals received by Fiosrú during the period 1 January to 31 December 2025 under both statutes. These comprise of a total of nine referrals under section 102 of the Garda Síochána Act 2005 and a further 30 referrals under section 203 of the Policing, Security and Community Safety Act 2024.

Fiosrú continues to conduct investigations into referrals received under the Garda Síochána Act 2005, with the number of investigations on hand steadily declining.

This is the second annual report published by Fiosrú on this subject.

Fiosrú's investigations on foot of Garda referrals account for only a small number of its overall investigations each year, the majority of which arise from public complaints. However, by their nature, investigations following Garda referrals tend to be the most serious and exceptional investigations the office undertakes.

A referral does not necessarily mean a garda has been accused of wrongdoing. Instead, it means that the matter must be investigated independently by Fiosrú to gather evidence and establish the facts.

The Policing, Security and Community Safety Act 2024 widened the scope of the non-fatal incidents which must be referred to Fiosrú under section 203 by expanding the definition of 'serious harm'. In addition to physical injuries, serious harm in relation to a person now includes that he or she is the victim of either a sexual offence or an abuse of power for a sexual purpose.

The following chapters identify trends and patterns in relation to the incidents that led to Garda referrals to Fiosrú during 2025. They include demographics and the circumstances by which those who died or were injured came into contact with gardaí, as well as summary details of incidents.

Key findings

Referred incidents

In 2025, An Garda Síochána made a total of 39 referrals to Fiosrú of incidents of death or serious harm involving garda contact. These incidents involved the deaths of 20 people. A further 24 people were injured. This compares with 37 referrals received in 2024 that involved 21 fatalities and 21 injured people.

Incidents of death or serious harm referred to Fiosrú are categorised and recorded on the basis of the circumstances in which they happened. Given the expanded statutory definition of 'serious harm' to include a person who is a victim of a sexual offence or an abuse of power for a sexual purpose, this report now includes two new categories of 'sexual offence' and 'abuse of power for a sexual purpose'. In describing the circumstances of referred incidents in these two new categories, this report uses the term victim in line with relevant statutory definitions.

Of the 39 referrals received in 2025:

- Nine related to road traffic incidents.
- Eight involved death or serious harm in or following garda custody.
- Ten related to apparent or attempted suicides.
- Six involved death or serious harm following garda contact.
- Five related to sexual offences.
- One related to the abuse of power for a sexual purpose.

Trends and patterns in referrals

Demographics

Out of a total number of 20 deceased and 24 injured people involved in incidents which led to referrals in 2025:

- Thirty-five (80%) were male, of whom 19 died and 16 were seriously injured. This compared with 37 males (88%) in referred incidents in 2024.
- Nine (20%) were female, of whom one died and eight were seriously injured. This compares with five females (12%) involved in incidents in 2024.
- Fourteen (32%) were aged under 25 years old, including one child under 18 years of age. This compares with six young people aged under 25 years (15%) in 2024.
- Eleven (25%) were aged between 41 to 50 years old.

Vulnerable individuals and people at risk

Many of the people involved in the incidents which led to referrals were vulnerable or at risk.

Mental health difficulties, alcohol and drugs usage and homelessness were recorded as factors, with a single referral sometimes including multiple factors.

Of the 39 referrals:

- Seventeen (44%) involved alcohol as a factor.
- Twelve (31%) involved people identified as having mental health difficulties.
- Eight (21%) involved drugs as a factor.
- Six (15%) involved people who were experiencing homelessness, or had a history of periods of homelessness.

Young men and dangerous driving

- Five referrals (13%) involved young men aged under 25 suspected of driving dangerously. These accounted for over half of the total of nine referrals relating to road traffic incidents.

Sexual offences

- Of the five referrals relating to victims of sexual offences, the five victims involved were all women. Three of the victims were serving gardaí.

Fiosrú investigations

Some of the investigations into referred incidents of death and serious harm recorded in this report are ongoing at the time of writing. The data reported here is based on the information available at the point of analysis in October 2026.

The stage of the investigations for the 39 referrals is:

- A total of 28 investigations were concluded and 11 investigations were ongoing.
- Of the 28 concluded investigations:
  - In four investigations, a report and investigation file was sent to the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP).
  - In one investigation, a report was sent to the Garda Commissioner.
  - In three investigations, no garda misconduct was identified.
  - Twenty investigations were discontinued for a range of reasons, including on the basis that no apparent breach of discipline or criminal offences were established.

1. Introduction

Fiosrú - Oifig an Ombudsman Póilíneachta (Office of the Police Ombudsman), is the independent statutory agency responsible for policing oversight.

It was established on 2 April 2025 with the entry into force of the Policing, Security and Community Safety Act 2024. Fiosrú is led by a Police Ombudsman appointed by the President of Ireland.

Fiosrú continues to conduct investigations which were already underway by its predecessor body, the Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission (GSOC), under the Garda Síochána Act 2005, with the number of such investigations on hand steadily declining.

Under the Policing, Security and Community Safety Act 2024, the objectives of the Police Ombudsman are to:

- promote public confidence in the processes for resolving complaints made by members of the public and in investigations;
- improve public understanding of the Police Ombudsman's role and functions;
- ensure that the Police Ombudsman's functions are performed in a timely, efficient and effective manner, and in accordance with fair procedures.

In addition to investigating complaints from the public concerning gardaí, Fiosrú is responsible for independently investigating referrals from An Garda Síochána of any matter where it appears to the Garda Commissioner that the act or omission of a garda may have resulted in the death of or serious harm to a person. These referrals are provided for in section 203 of the Policing, Security and Community Safety Act 2024 and apply to gardaí whether they are on or off-duty. In practice, the Garda Commissioner delegates the decision to refer incidents to superintendents at Garda district level.

Referrals are investigated by Fiosrú under section 208 of the Policing, Security and Community Safety Act 2024 to gather evidence and establish the facts of the matter. Under section 209, Fiosrú investigators have all the powers of gardaí for the purposes of an investigation.

A referral does not necessarily mean a garda has been accused of wrongdoing. Instead, it means that the matter must be investigated independently by Fiosrú to gather evidence and establish the facts.

This report presents data on all referrals of incidents of deaths or serious harm involving gardaí received by Fiosrú in 2025. Between 1 January and 1 April 2025, the referrals were made under section 102 of the Garda Síochána Act 2005. From 2 April 2025, the referrals were made under section 203 of the Policing, Security and Community Safety Act 2024.

This is the second annual report on this subject published by Fiosrú and it is the last report that will include new referrals made under section 102 of the Garda Síochána Act 2005.

The following chapters provide a data analysis and identify trends and patterns for referrals of incidents received throughout 2025. The data includes details of the circumstances by which those who died or were injured came into contact with gardaí, and also available demographic information.

Demographics recorded in this report are the age and gender of the deceased or injured people included in referrals. The data is provided by An Garda Síochána or directly recorded by Fiosrú. Data on the ethnicity of deceased or injured people in referred incidents is not included in this report as it is not routinely recorded by An Garda Síochána.

This report includes anonymised summaries of the circumstances and outcomes of a number of incidents which led to referrals. Only summaries of incidents in which Fiosrú's investigation was concluded in 2025 are included.

The incidents documented in this report are, by their nature, among the most serious and resource intensive investigations that Fiosrú conducts. They represent a small portion of the independent investigations that Fiosrú carries out each year, which are mostly generated by public complaints about gardaí.

New types of serious harm

The Policing, Security and Community Safety Act 2024 expands the definition of what represents 'serious harm' to now include someone being a victim of a sexual offence or an abuse of power for a sexual purpose. Under section 193, 'serious harm' in relation to a person means:

(a) an injury to the person that:
  i. creates a substantial risk of death,
  ii. causes serious disfigurement, or
  iii. causes substantial loss or impairment of mobility of the body as a whole or of the function of any particular bodily member or organ,

(b) he or she is the victim of a sexual offence, or

(c) he or she is the victim of an abuse of power for a sexual purpose;

'sexual offence' has the same meaning as it has in the Sex Offenders Act 2001.

'Abuse of power for a sexual purpose' is defined in section 193 of the Policing, Security and Community Safety Act 2024 to mean:

"any behaviour by a member of garda personnel which takes advantage of his or her position as such a member to misuse his or her position, authority or powers for a sexual purpose or an improper emotional relationship with any other person."

In documenting referrals which are made to Fiosrú under the new definition of serious harm, this report abbreviates these two new categories to 'sexual offence' and 'abuse of power for a sexual purpose'.

Victims

In describing the circumstances of referred incidents in these two new categories, this report uses the term victim. This is in line with the definition of 'serious harm' in section 193 of the Policing, Security and Community Safety Act 2024.

The Criminal Justice (Victims of Crime) Act 2017 applies to investigations conducted by Fiosrú. According to section 4(2) of the Act, its application is not dependent on the commission of an offence having to be established (nor is it dependent on establishing whether the person concerned suffered any harm caused by an offence).

Further information is available in Appendix B

Categories of referrals

Referrals of incidents of death and serious harm are separated by Fiosrú into the following seven categories which broadly align with those used by other police oversight bodies and which take into account the expanded definition of serious harm in the Policing, Security and Community Safety Act 2024:

- Road traffic incident
- Death or serious harm in or following garda custody (garda custody)
- Apparent or attempted suicide
- Death or serious harm following garda contact (garda contact)
- Sexual offence
- Abuse of power for a sexual purpose
- Discharge of a firearm or other weapon

Definitions of categories of death

Road traffic incident

The category of road traffic incident (RTI) includes referrals of death or serious harm of drivers, passengers, pedestrians or other road users arising from garda pursuits and other garda traffic-related activity.

This category does not include:

- Deaths or serious harm that happen following a RTI where gardaí attend immediately after the event as an emergency service; or
- Death or serious harm from RTIs where gardaí had no involvement in the RTI but happened to be in contact with the deceased or injured person a short time prior to the incident.

Death or serious harm in or following garda custody

The category of garda custody includes incidents of death or serious harm that happen while a person is being arrested or taken into custody, is in custody, or that happen following a period in custody. It also includes incidents involving the death or serious harm of people who have been detained by gardaí under section 12 of the Mental Health Act 2001. The death or serious harm may have taken place in a Garda station or on private premises, in a public place, or in a Garda car or another vehicle.

This category does not include:

- Apparent suicides that occur during or after a person is released from garda custody. These are included in the apparent and attempted suicide category.

Sexual offence

This category comprises incidents of serious harm where a person is the victim of a sexual offence.

A sexual offence for the purpose of a referral is defined in the Schedule of the Sex Offenders Act 2001. The offences include rape, sexual assault or other offences of a sexual nature. The full list of offences is included in Appendix C.

Abuse of power for a sexual purpose

This category comprises incidents of serious harm where a person is the victim of an abuse of power for a sexual purpose.

Abuse of power for a sexual purpose is any behaviour by a member of garda personnel which takes advantage of their position to misuse their position, authority or powers for a sexual purpose or an improper emotional relationship with a person.

and serious harm

Apparent or attempted suicide

This category includes apparent or attempted suicides that happen while in garda custody, following garda custody where the time spent in custody may be relevant to the death or serious harm, or following garda contact.

The term 'suicide' does not necessarily mean that this has been the verdict following a Coroner's inquest as in some cases the investigation is ongoing or the inquest is still pending. If Fiosrú is not requested as the lead agency to investigate, it would not have the inquest verdict and therefore this would not be recorded. In this report, the investigation is only included in this category if, after considering the nature of the incident of death or serious harm, the circumstances suggest that the death or serious harm was the intended outcome of a self-inflicted act, for example, a hanging, or where there was some evidence of 'suicidal ideation', such as a last letter or an expression of suicidal ideation, or an intent to act is recorded in custody records.

Discharge of a firearm or other weapon

This category is comprised of incidents of death or serious harm where a garda discharged a conventional firearm. It also includes less lethal weapons such as an air gun or stun gun, or a conducted energy device, such as a Taser, as defined in the Firearms Act 1925 (as amended).

This category does not include:

- Incidents of death or serious harm that include the use of OC spray (Oleoresin Capsicum, also known as pepper spray).

Death or serious harm following garda contact

The category of garda contact is comprised of incidents of deaths and serious harm that follow contact with gardaí that did not involve arrest or detention under section 12 of the Mental Health Act 2001.

For more detailed definitions and information about how incidents are categorised and recorded, see Appendix B.

Purpose of Referrals

For the purpose of performing their duties, the law provides An Garda Síochána with extraordinary powers and gardaí may use reasonable force when lawfully exercising their powers.

By providing independent and effective oversight of policing in Ireland, Fiosrú provides an essential role in securing and maintaining public trust and confidence in the police. Fiosrú offers independent assurance in relation to the acts or omissions of gardaí that it investigates and serves as a fundamental protection against ill-treatment and misconduct by gardaí.

Section 203, Policing, Security and Community Safety Act 2024

203 (1) The Garda Commissioner shall, subject to subsection (2), without delay, refer to the Police Ombudsman any matter that appears to the Garda Commissioner to indicate that the act or omission of a member of garda personnel may have resulted in the death of, or serious harm to, a person.

Section 102, Garda Síochána Act 2005

102(1) The Garda Commissioner shall refer to the Ombudsman Commission any matter that appears to the Garda Commissioner to indicate that the conduct of a member of the Garda Síochána may have resulted in the death of, or serious harm to, a person.

Constitutional rights and human rights

Articles 40 to 44 set out the fundamental rights under the Irish Constitution, Bunreacht na hÉireann.

Of particular relevance to this report is Article 40.1 of the Irish Constitution, which states that all citizens shall, as human persons, be held equal before the law.

Additionally, Article 40.3 protects the right to life of every citizen.

Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) also acknowledges and protects the right to life of the person. The jurisprudence of the ECHR has extrapolated from this guarantee, an obligation on contracting States to cause investigations to be undertaken, including when a person dies in police custody or as a consequence of police action.

Ireland as a contracting State to the ECHR, holds the primary duty for upholding Article 2 and is obliged to ensure the independent investigation of such incidents. Fiosrú is one of a number of State actors that assist the State in fulfilling its obligation in this regard.

Article 3 of the ECHR prohibits torture and inhuman or degrading treatment of all people.

Fiosrú's investigations into referrals of death or serious harm form an important element in the protection of fundamental and human rights in this State.

In order to comply with Article 2 of the ECHR, investigations into any death following police contact should adhere to five principles developed by the European Court of Human Rights.

These five principles are:

- Independence
- Effectiveness
- Promptness
- Public scrutiny
- Family involvement

These principles are at the heart of all Fiosrú's investigations into deaths.

The European Convention on Human Rights Act 2003 gives further effect to the ECHR in Ireland. This law requires that Irish State bodies, including Fiosrú and An Garda Síochána, perform their functions in a manner that meets the State's obligations under the ECHR.

Investigations of referred matters

Once Fiosrú receives a referral, it must initiate an independent investigation under section 208 of the Policing, Security and Community Safety Act 2024. The purpose of the investigation is to gather evidence and establish the facts of the incident that has been referred.

For referrals requiring an urgent response, Garda superintendents contact Fiosrú through a dedicated telephone number which is monitored 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

As soon as a referral is made, Fiosrú's on-call senior designated officer contacts the superintendent immediately to obtain further information and establish the circumstances of the referral as known at the time.

Fiosrú's investigations can be criminal or non-criminal in nature or both. An investigation into both criminal and non-criminal matters is called a hybrid investigation. Non-criminal investigations inquire into garda behaviour or conduct. Criminal investigations inquire into alleged criminal offences.

While Fiosrú conducts investigations, it has no role in disciplining gardaí or prosecuting criminal matters.

Criminal investigations

In conducting a criminal investigation, Fiosrú investigators have full policing powers, equivalent to all the powers, immunities and privileges conferred, and all the duties imposed, on gardaí.

Where no evidence of criminality is found, Fiosrú will discontinue or close the investigation. In investigations where the evidence indicates that the act or omission of a garda may constitute an offence, Fiosrú sends its report and investigation file to the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP).

It is for the DPP alone to then decide whether to direct a prosecution and what charges to direct. For less serious offences, charges can be tried summarily (in the District Court). For more serious offences, charges are tried on indictment (in the Circuit Court or the Central Criminal Court). The DPP must inform Fiosrú of its decision whether or not to institute a prosecution.

European Convention on Human Rights

Article 2
Right to life

1. Everyone's right to life shall be protected by law. No one shall be deprived of his life intentionally save in the execution of a sentence of a court following his conviction of a crime for which this penalty is provided by law.
2. Deprivation of life shall not be regarded as inflicted in contravention of this Article when it results from the use of force which is no more than absolutely necessary:
   (a) in defence of any person from unlawful violence;
   (b) in order to effect a lawful arrest or to prevent the escape of a person lawfully detained;
   (c) in action lawfully taken for the purpose of quelling a riot or insurrection.

Article 3
Prohibition of torture

No one shall be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Non-criminal investigations

In some investigations the evidence gathered indicates that the matter should be dealt with by way of conduct or performance proceedings. In such circumstances, Fiosrú sends a report to the Garda Commissioner with recommendations as appropriate.

The decision to take action on foot of Fiosrú's report is exclusively a matter for the Garda Commissioner. This may result in a garda facing conduct proceedings, performance proceedings or any other proceedings in An Garda Síochaná which deal with unsatisfactory performance. The outcomes of these may include a garda being put on a performance plan or the imposition of a sanction such as dismissal, warning, or reduction in pay. The Garda Commissioner must notify Fiosrú of any actions to be taken on foot of a report received.

It is sometimes the case that it is immediately clear that there is no evidence of a breach by a garda of the Standards of Professional Behaviour Regulations 2025 or a criminal offence. For example, post mortem and toxicology reports may show that a deceased person passed away from medical reasons or reasons unrelated to any garda act or omission. This means that further investigation will not be pursued and the investigation may be discontinued. The grounds for discontinuing an investigation are set out in section 213(2) of the Policing, Security and Community Safety Act 2024. These include where the Police Ombudsman is of the opinion that further investigation is not necessary, reasonably practicable or proportionate in the circumstances.

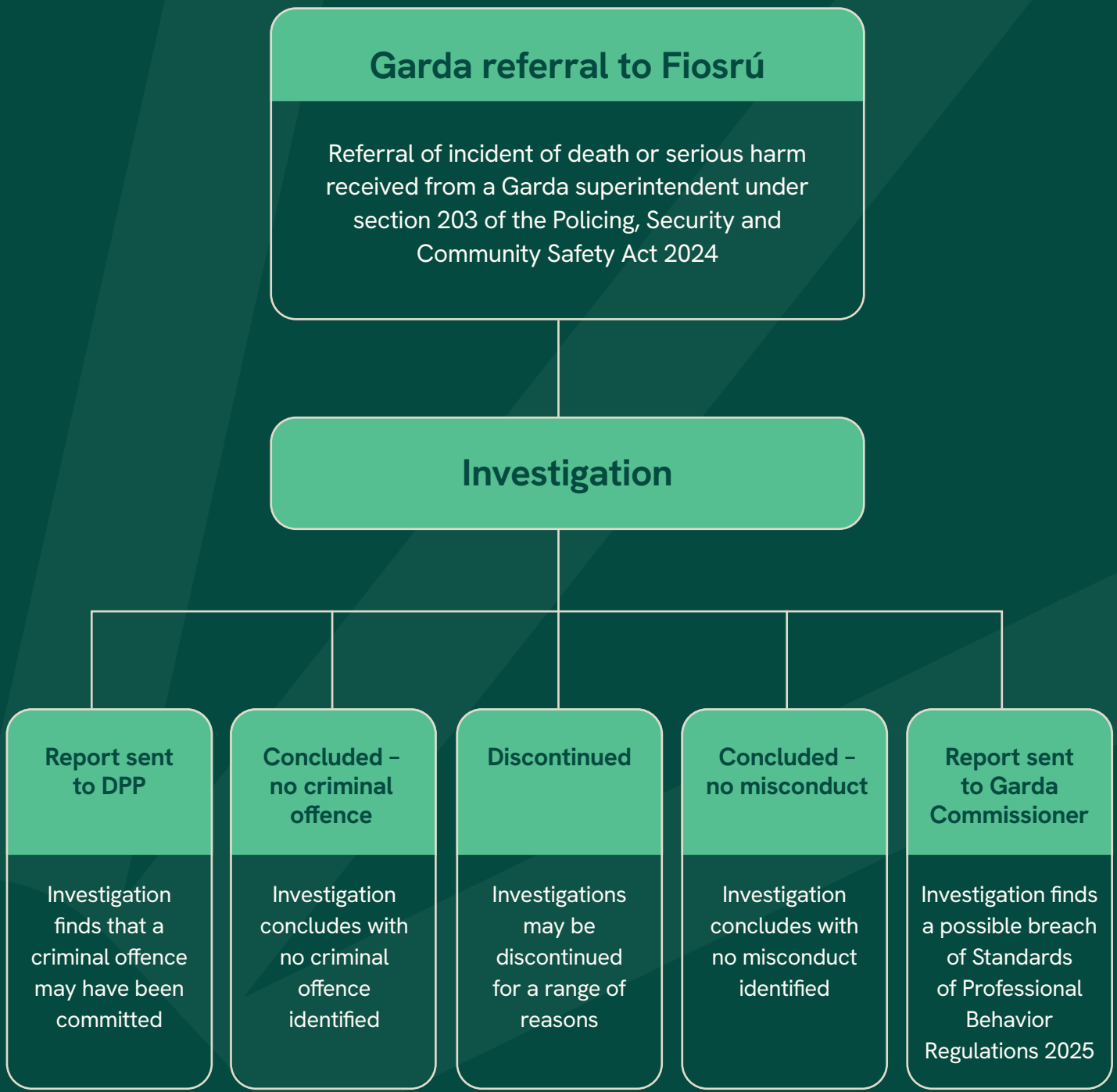
Referrals received under section 102 of the Garda Síochána Act 2005 were initially dealt with by a preliminary examination. The purpose of the preliminary examination was to decide whether a criminal or non-criminal investigation should be conducted. This preliminary stage is not provided for in the Policing, Security and Community Safety Act 2024.

Chart 1 on page 17 shows the pathway for referrals received under section 203 of the Policing, Security and Community Safety Act 2024 and therefore does not include the preliminary examination.

Fiosrú's On Call Teams – Round the Clock Response

Fiosrú has an on-call team of investigators available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. These investigators are available to attend incident scenes at any time of the day or night anywhere in Ireland. Working from three office locations in Dublin, Cork and Longford, Fiosrú investigators are based around the country and are dispatched to and remain present at incident locations until all of Fiosrú's immediate investigative actions are completed. These teams are each headed by a Senior Designated Officer who has overall responsibility for this urgent response supported by multiple teams in areas such as witness appeals, technical support and specialist equipment. Fiosrú senior investigators are trained in such areas as critical incident response and the strategic management of complex cases to ensure they provide the highest standards of investigation. A number of Fiosrú investigators have also undertaken further study and training to enable them to operate in highly specialised roles such as advanced-level interviewing and victim support.

Chart 1: Referral pathway



What happens during an investigation?

Fiosrú has a total of six teams available to investigate referrals of incidents of death or serious harm. One team, led by a Senior Designated Officer (SDO), is on call at all times with the capacity to respond to an incident anywhere in the country and to conduct an independent investigation.

Depending on the circumstances of the incident, other investigators are assigned to assist the on-call team in the investigation. While Fiosrú aims to investigates all matters expeditiously, investigations may be dependent on the receipt of a range of official reports, such as forensic collision reports or toxicology reports.

An investigation team led by a SDO may take a number of the following actions depending on the circumstances of the referral:

- Attend the scene of a death or injury;
- Preserve the scene of a death or injury for forensic examination;
- Submit material for forensic examination;
- Send vehicles for forensic examination;
- Collect and analyse CCTV footage and other sources of digital evidence;
- Gather witness details and statements;
- Interview injured people, gardaí and other people involved;
- Gather further evidence, including Garda reports and medical records;
- Notify the Coroner of a death and provide the Coroner with a briefing on the circumstances of the death;
- Notify the Coroner of preliminary post mortem findings, if Fiosrú has primacy of the case;
- Recommend a State post mortem by the State Pathologist and provide the State Pathologist with a briefing on the circumstances of the death;
- Attend a post mortem;
- Meet with the family of a deceased person to provide updates on the investigation;
- Deploy a dedicated Family Liaison Officer to engage with and support the family of a deceased person;
- Conduct house-to-house and other witness enquiries;
- Liaise with experts such as ballistic firearms experts, road traffic collision experts and medical consultants for opinion on the cause of injuries;
- Obtain court orders such as search warrants and production orders;
- Seize and examine digital devices;
- Conduct arrests;
- Conduct interviews under caution;
- Search premises.

2. Overall Findings

Fiosrú received a total of 39 referrals of incidents of death or serious harm involving garda contact in 2025. This compares to 37 referrals in 2024 and 35 referrals in 2023.

A referral may involve the death or serious injury of more than one person. The 39 referrals in 2025 involved a total of 44 people of whom 20 were deceased and 24 were injured.

Referrals of incidents of death or serious harm are separated by Fiosrú into the following categories that broadly align with those used by other police oversight bodies and reflect the expanded definition of 'serious harm' in the Policing, Security and Community Safety Act 2024:

- Road traffic incident
- Death or serious harm in or following garda custody (garda custody)
- Apparent or attempted suicide
- Death or serious harm following garda contact (garda contact)
- Sexual offence
- Abuse of power for a sexual purpose
- Discharge of a firearm or other weapon

For more detailed definitions and information about how incidents are categorised and recorded, see Appendix B.

Of the 39 referrals received in 2025:

- Nine related to road traffic incidents.
- Eight involved death or serious harm in or following garda custody.
- Ten related to apparent or attempted suicides.
- Six involved death or serious harm following garda contact.
- Five related to sexual offences.
- One related to the abuse of power for a sexual purpose.

In 2025, there were no referrals relating to the discharge of a firearm or other weapon. This category includes the discharge of a conventional firearm and also less lethal weapons including conducted energy devices (also known as Tasers). Specialist gardaí have used Tasers since 2007. Since December 2025, uniformed gardaí in designated stations have been authorised to carry Tasers on operational duty on a pilot basis. All gardaí carrying Tasers as part of the pilot programme also wear body worn cameras.

Table 1 shows the number of referrals relating to deaths and serious harm received in 2025 across each category. Two of the referrals involved both a person's death and another person being seriously harm.

Table 1: Incidents of death and serious harm by category

Category of referred incident	Death	Serious harm	Death & serious harm	Total
Road traffic incident	1	6	2	9
Garda custody	6	2	0	8
Apparent or attempted suicide	7	3	0	10
Garda contact	4	2	0	6
Sexual offence	0	5	0	5
Abuse of power for a sexual purpose	0	1	0	1
Total referrals	**18**	**19**	**2**	**39**

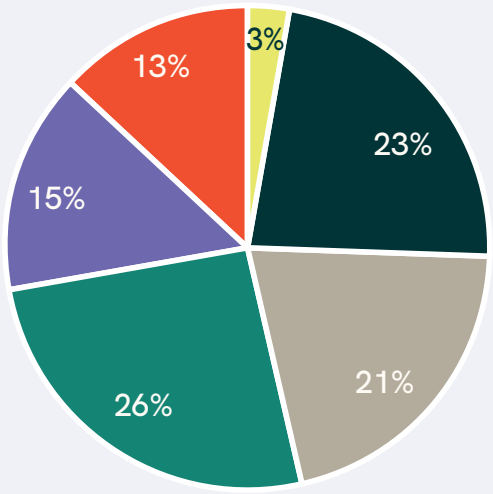
The findings summarised in this chapter are set out in further detail by category in the following chapters.

Demographic information about those who died or were seriously harmed is presented in the following chapters, along with details of the circumstances of the incidents which led to referrals to Fiosrú in 2025. Also documented are the reasons captured for the deceased or injured person's contact with gardaí and, where relevant, any reasons for their detention in custody by gardaí and the preliminary cause of death as recorded by Fiosrú.

Anonymised summaries of the circumstances and outcomes of a number of incidents which led to referrals are also included in this report. Only summaries of incidents in which Fiosrú's investigation was concluded in 2025 are included.

The following chapters also highlight trends and patterns on a range of social issues and vulnerabilities including mental health difficulties, alcohol and drug use and addiction and homelessness.

Chart 2:
Incidents of death and serious harm by category



Road traffic incidents	23%
Garda custody	21%
Apparent or attempted suicides	26%
Garda contact	15%
Sexual offences	13%
Abuse of power for a sexual purpose	3%

Investigations

In 30 of the 39 referrals received in 2025, Fiosrú immediately sent on-call investigators to the scenes of incidents of death or serious harm. Not all referrals require an urgent response. For example, the nature of a referred matter may be such that there is no need to immediately secure evidence or conduct enquiries.

The quickest response time from referral to attendance at the scene of an incident by Fiosrú's on-call investigators was just over an hour. The location of the incident and the distance that the Fiosrú on-call team is required to travel influences the overall response time to an incident. Fiosrú has offices in Dublin, Cork and Longford and can respond to incidents across the country.

Stage of investigations

Some of the investigations into referrals of death and serious harm recorded in this report are ongoing at the time of writing. The data reported is based on the information available at the point of analysis in October 2026.

The stage of the investigations for each of the 39 referrals received in 2025 as of October 2026 are detailed below:

A total of 28 investigations were concluded. Of these:

- Four investigations identified an apparent criminal offence. Fiosrú sent a report and investigation file to the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP).
  - The DPP's decision is pending in relation to three referrals.
  - The DPP directed no prosecution in relation to one referral.
- One investigation identified an apparent breach of garda regulations. Fiosrú sent a report to the Garda Commissioner for disciplinary proceedings.
- Three investigations identified no breaches of garda regulations.
- Twenty investigations were discontinued as further investigation was found to be not necessary, reasonably practicable or proportionate.
  - Sixteen investigations did not identify any evidence of an apparent breach of garda regulations or a criminal offence.
  - Four investigations were not practicable to continue as the injured person could not be contacted or did not engage with Fiosrú.
- Eleven investigations were ongoing.

Demographics

Age

Of the 44 people who were seriously harmed or who died in the incidents which led to garda referrals to Fiosrú in 2025, the largest age group was children and young people under the age of 25.

A total of 14 people were in this age group, accounting for 32% of those involved in referrals in the year. This compares with six children and young people (15%) involved in the 37 referred incidents received in 2024.

Of the 14 children and young people, 13 were aged under 25 years and one was under 18 years of age.

In 2025, three individuals in the 18 to 24 age group died. The 10 remaining young people and one child were injured.

A total of 10 people (25%) were in the 41 to 50 age group, making this the second largest age group. Of the 11 people aged between 41 to 50, seven were deceased and four were seriously injured.

Table 2 below shows the breakdown of the age ranges by referral category and in percentages.

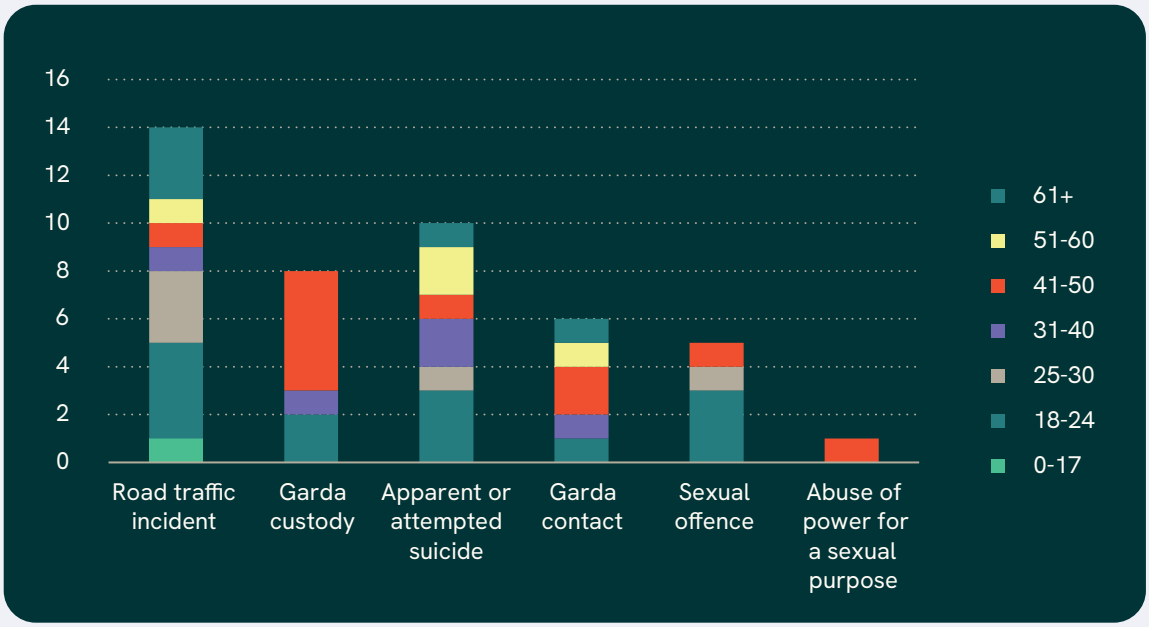
Table 2: Ages by category

Age range of deceased and injured people by category	0-17	18-24	25-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61+	Total
Road traffic incident	1	4	3	1	1	1	3	14
Garda custody	0	2	0	1	5	0	0	8
Apparent or attempted suicide	0	3	1	2	1	2	1	10
Garda contact	0	1	0	1	2	1	1	6
Sexual offence	0	3	1	0	1	0	0	5
Abuse of power for a sexual purpose	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Total referrals	**1**	**13**	**5**	**5**	**11**	**4**	**5**	**44**
Total (%)	**2%**	**30%**	**11%**	**11%**	**25%**	**10%**	**11%**	

A total of 201 gardaí were involved in Fiosrú's investigations into the 39 incidents of death or serious harm that were referred. This includes gardaí investigated for a potential breach of discipline or criminal offence, as well as gardaí who provided reports or statements and gardaí interviewed by Fiosrú investigators.

Chart 3 highlights that the number of the deceased and injured people in the 41 to 50 years age group is highest in the category of garda custody. The majority of the deceased and injured people in the garda contact category were over 30 years of age. One third of those who were injured or died in the road traffic incidents category were aged under 25 years.

Chart 3: Ages by category



Gender

Of the 44 deceased or injured people involved in referrals, 35 (80%) were male and nine (20%) were female. Table 3 and Chart 4 show the breakdown of gender by referral category.

The category of road traffic incidents involved 11 men, two women and one boy.

Only men were involved in the incidents of death and serious harm which came under the two categories of garda custody and apparent or attempted suicide.

In the two categories of sexual offence and abuse of power for a sexual purpose, the victims were only women.

Of the 20 people who died, 19 were men and one was a woman. Of the men who died, three were aged 18 to 24.

Of the 24 people who were seriously injured, 15 were men, eight were women and one was a boy under 18. Of these, seven men and three women were young people aged 18 to 24.

Chart 4: Gender by category

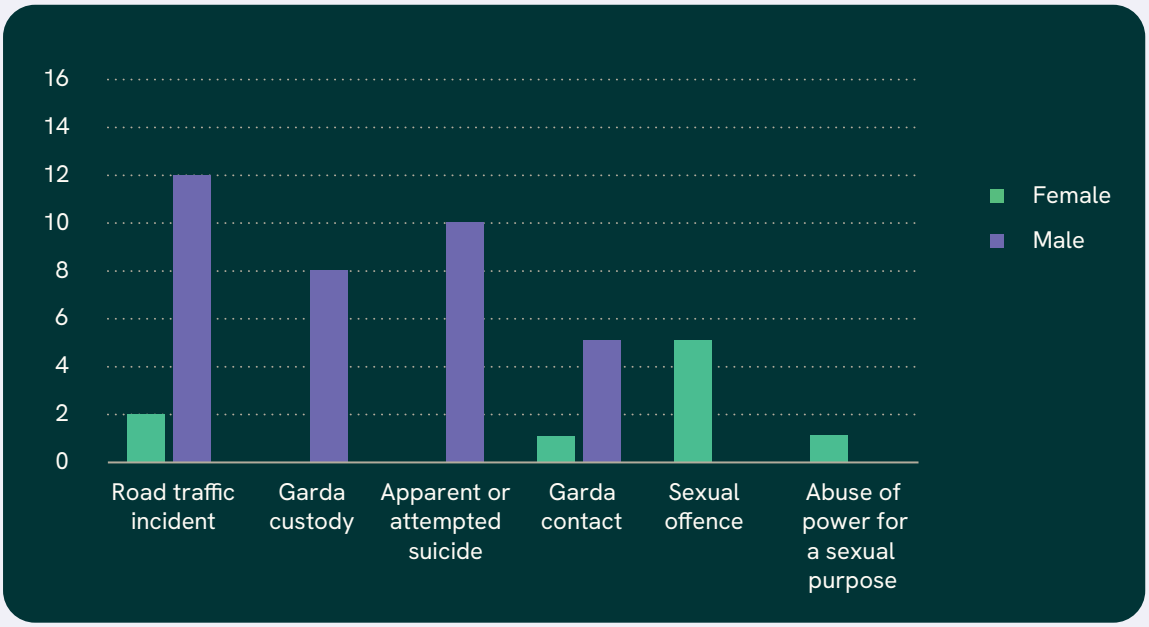


Table 3: Gender by category

Category	F	M	Total
Road traffic incident	2	12	14
Garda custody	0	8	8
Apparent or attempted suicide	0	10	10
Garda contact	1	5	6
Sexual offence	5	0	5
Abuse of power for a sexual purpose	1	0	1
Total	**9**	**35**	**44**

Referring Garda divisions

Of the 39 referrals received, 14 (36%) came from Garda superintendents in the Dublin Metropolitan Region (DMR). This is to be expected given the concentration of the population and policing activity in the capital. The DMR is divided into six divisions. Of the 14 referrals made in the capital, four each related to DMR West and DMR North Central, and three each related to DMR South and DMR South Central.

Outside Dublin, Donegal was the Garda division with the highest number of referrals, with six received in 2025.

Reason for detention

In some referrals, gardaí had exercised their powers to arrest and detain people. The reasons for detention as documented in this report are those recorded by gardaí and grounded in statute.

In 2025, nine people out of the total of 44 people involved in referrals were arrested and detained by gardaí. The most common reason for detention was public order offences for intoxication, recorded in six referrals.

No individuals were detained under section 12 of the Mental Health Act 2001.

Table 5 lists the statutory reasons why gardaí detained eight of the nine people in custody. One person was in the process of arrest when it became apparent that they were unwell. This person was immediately taken to hospital where they died a short time later. Due to how this incident unfolded, the statute under which the person was detained was not recorded.

Reason for contact with gardaí

The reasons for a deceased or injured person's contact with gardaí is recorded by Fiosrú based on an analysis of the circumstances of the referral. The deceased or injured person may have come into contact with gardaí due to an accident, for allegedly committing an offence, or due to circumstances in life that left them in a crisis or emergency situation. Where relevant, the reasons for contact are documented under each referral category in the following chapters.

Table 4: Referring Garda division

Referring Garda division	
Donegal	6
DMR West	4
Kildare / Carlow	4
DMR North Central	4
Clare / Tipperary	3
DMR South	3
DMR South Central	3
Mayo / Roscommon / Longford	3
Cork County	2
Galway	1
Laois / Offaly	1
Limerick	1
Louth / Cavan / Monaghan	1
Meath / Westmeath	1
Sligo / Leitrim	1
Wexford / Wicklow	1
Total	**39**

Table 5: Reason for detention in referrals

Reason for detention	Number of people
Section 4 Criminal Justice (Public Order) Act 1994 - Public intoxication	5
Section 4 and 6 Criminal Justice (Public Order) Act 1994 - Public intoxication	1
Section 4 Criminal Justice (Theft and Fraud Offences) Act 2001 - Theft	1
Section 5 of the Road Traffic Act 2010 - Driving under the influence of an intoxicant	1
Total	**8**

Vulnerable individuals and people at risk

The data shows the prevalence of mental health difficulties, and the usage of alcohol and drugs in many of the incidents that led to the referrals of incidents of death and serious harm received in 2025. This highlights the often challenging and complex situations, crises and vulnerable individuals that gardaí come into contact with in their important role as first responders.

For each referral included in this report, it is recorded whether mental health difficulties, alcohol and drugs usage or homelessness is a factor relevant to the deceased or injured person. A referral may have more than one factor. Fiosrú records these factors based on information received from gardaí, self-reported information from the deceased or injured persons, or evidence provided by medical staff or people known to the deceased or injured person. For detailed information on how these factors are documented, see Appendix B.

Mental health difficulties, or the usage of alcohol or drugs were factors in 25 referrals (64%). This is down from 29 referrals in 2024, which accounted for 78% of the total number of 37 referrals.

Out of 39 referrals, 12 (31%) involved people with mental health difficulties. The type of mental health difficulties recorded from a range of sources included bipolar disorder, depression, psychosis, schizophrenia, suicidal ideation and history of suicide attempts. No individuals involved in an incident that was referred for investigation in 2025 had been detained by gardaí under section 12 of the Mental Health Act 2001.

In 17 referrals (44%) alcohol was a factor and in eight referrals (21%) drugs were a factor. These factors are recorded if the deceased or injured person was intoxicated by alcohol or drugs at the time of the incident, or if there was evidence that alcohol or drugs featured heavily in their lives.

Factors in referrals



Chart 5 highlights the prevalence and co-existence of mental health, alcohol and drugs in the referrals of death and serious harm received in 2025.

In some referrals, there were multiple co-existing factors. The intersection of factors is important to note.

- In four referrals, mental health and alcohol were co-existing factors
- In two referrals, mental health and drugs were co-existing factors
- In two referrals, alcohol and drugs were co-existing factors
- In two referrals, mental health difficulties were noted with co-existing factors of alcohol and drugs

Six referrals (15%) included homelessness as a factor. These referrals included four individuals who were homeless at the time of the incident and two individuals who had a history of periods of homelessness.

Chart 5: Referrals involving mental health, alcohol and/or drugs



Family Liaison Officers – Supporting Relatives

Fiosrú sends its Family Liaison Officers (FLOs) to support a family where there has been a death. FLOs support families where the circumstances of an incident are complex, or through the court or coronial process.

The FLO serves as the main point of contact between Fiosrú and the family of the deceased person during an investigation. These highly trained staff are an essential part of the investigation team.

A FLO may also be appointed to the family by An Garda Síochána. In such circumstances, Fiosrú will liaise with the An Garda Síochána FLO, where it is appropriate.

Fiosrú's FLOs have all completed specialist training to develop their knowledge and skills in supporting people in crisis or bereavement. They receive specialist training on emotional support, trauma-informed practices and supporting families through the criminal justice system.

FLOs ensure a human rights-based approach to Fiosrú's work by supporting the principle of family involvement in its investigations under Article 2 of the European Human Rights Convention.

3. Road Traffic Incidents

In 2025, there were nine referrals of incidents of death or serious harm related to a road traffic incident (RTI) involving three fatalities and 11 injured people.

The category of RTI includes referrals of death or serious harm of drivers, passengers, pedestrians or other road users arising from garda traffic-related activity, including pursuits.

This category does not include:

- Deaths or serious harm that happen following a RTI where gardaí attend immediately after the event as an emergency service; or
- Death or serious harm from RTIs where gardaí had no involvement in the RTI but happened to be in contact with the deceased or injured person a short time prior to the incident.

Referrals are classified as 'pursuit-related' for the purpose of this report if:

- They involved a pursuit by gardaí;
- Gardaí began to follow a vehicle which failed to stop;
- There was a collision involving a vehicle that was recently pursued by gardaí but the gardaí lost sight of the vehicle; or
- Gardaí were driving in the direction of a vehicle before notifying the Regional Control Centre and obtaining authorisation for a pursuit.

Out of the nine referrals related to road traffic incidents, six were pursuit-related. These involved two deceased people and nine injured people.

In the referrals that were pursuit-related the reasons for pursuit being initiated included suspected dangerous driving, attempt to flee and suspicious activity.

Demographics and other factors

Of the 14 deceased or injured people, 11 were men, two were women and one was a boy under 18 years of age. The most common age group was the 18 to 24 year olds, who were involved in 29% of referrals related to RTIs.

Five young people under 25 years of age were involved in this category. One injured person was a child under 18 years of age and a further four young people were in the 18 to 24 years age range.

Three people over 60 years of age were involved in this category.

Of the three people in this category who died, two were men over 60 years of age and one was a man in the 25 to 30 years age group. There were no deaths of children or young people in the road traffic incident category in 2025.

Type of road user

Of the 14 people involved in the nine referrals related to RTIs:

- Two were drivers of vehicles pursued by gardaí.
- Five were passengers in vehicles, one of whom died.
- Three were pedestrians, two of whom died.
- Two were drivers of an unrelated vehicle.
- Two were riders of an e-scooter.

How Fiosrú investigates road traffic incidents

Fiosrú investigators attend the scene of serious and fatal road traffic incidents involving gardaí immediately on receipt of a referral, when required. Fiosrú investigators are trained in critical incident response and the strategic management of complex cases.

During an investigation of a road traffic incident, Fiosrú investigators may:

- Attend the scene;
- Photograph the scene;
- Identify and speak with witnesses;
- Request a forensic collision report from a trained and specialist Garda Forensic Collision Investigator;
- Collect and analyse TETRA secure radio recordings. TETRA are the secure radios used by gardaí to call in to the Regional Control Centre;
- Collect and analyse CCTV footage to analyse the incident and map the journey of the vehicles involved;
- Collect and analyse recordings of emergency 999 calls;
- Collect and analyse the black box data recorder information from vehicles, where available;
- Collect documentation proving the Capacity Based Driving (CBD) level of emergency response driving of gardaí;
- Analyse the actions of the gardaí against the relevant An Garda Síochána policies, procedures and related documents.

Reason for contact with gardaí

The most common reasons for garda contact in referrals involving RTIs was suspected dangerous driving, recorded in three incidents.

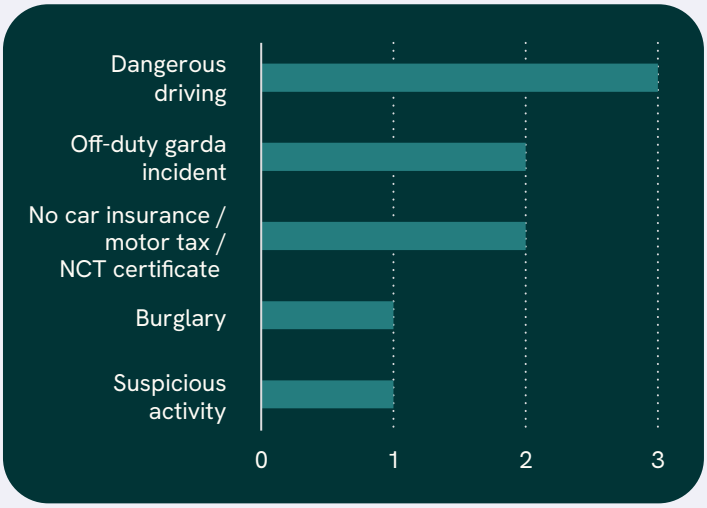
Two incidents related to off-duty gardaí driving vehicles that were involved in RTIs. One incident involved an off-duty garda and a pedestrian who obtained fatal injuries and another incident involved an off-duty garda where a motorcyclist was injured.

Two incidents involved gardaí identifying vehicles with no insurance, motor tax or NCT certificate.

The reason for contact in the remaining two incidents were suspicious activity and a reported burglary.

Chart 6 highlights the reason for contact with gardaí recorded for referrals relating to RTIs.

Chart 6: Reason for contact with gardaí in referrals relating to road traffic incidents



Young men and dangerous driving

Out of the nine referrals relating to road traffic incidents (RTIs), five involved young men under 25 years of age who were suspected of driving dangerously. This represents 13% of referrals received in 2025, and over half (56%) of the total referrals relating to RTIs. This compares with four referrals related to RTIs involving young men in 2024.

These five referrals involved a total of six young people, all men. Two of these young people were children under 18 years of age, the remaining four men were young people under 25 years of age. This compares with ten young men involved in referrals relating to RTIs in 2024.

Four of the five referrals involving young people were related to garda pursuits.

These referrals all resulted in serious harm. There were no deaths of young people in the referrals relating to RTIs received in 2025.

Two of these referrals involved a stolen car being allegedly driven dangerously by a young man, of which one involved the young man driving on the wrong side of a road in a town.

One referral involved two young men riding an e-scooter with no helmets.

The reason for contact with gardaí in three of these referrals was because of suspected dangerous driving. One referral was due to a burglary and one referral was due to an incidental road traffic incident involving off duty gardaí.

Five of these young people were the injured people named in the referral. These young people were either the driver of or a passenger in the vehicle involved, or riders of an e-scooter involved. In addition, there was one other young man involved in the incidents referred.

Outcomes of concluded investigations

Pedestrian killed in incident involving stolen car driven by young man

Incident

Gardaí on patrol observed a car speeding down the main street of a town in the early hours of the morning. Gardaí began to follow the car. Within moments, the car lost control, struck two pedestrians and crashed into a wall. Gardaí called an ambulance and the two pedestrians were taken to hospital. One of the pedestrians died from their injuries in hospital a few hours later and the other sustained serious injuries. It later became known that the car was stolen and was being driven by a young man who fled the scene and was found nearby by gardaí a short time later.

Investigation

A Fiosrú investigator attended the scene of the incident within a few hours to photograph and examine the area and the car. Fiosrú investigators also collected and reviewed a significant amount of CCTV footage, mapping the route of the car and analysing the contact between the Garda car and the stolen car. Fiosrú obtained a number of accounts from gardaí involved as well as documents to prove the Capacity Based Driving (CBD) training level for emergency response driving of the garda driver.

Outcome

The CCTV footage corroborated the accounts of the gardaí involved. The Fiosrú investigation found no evidence that gardaí contributed to the actions of the stolen car. The garda driver was appropriately trained to CBD 2 training level for emergency response driving. Gardaí had observed the stolen car driving over the legal speed limit and had a lawful basis to follow and attempt to stop the car. The Fiosrú investigation found no apparent breach of An Garda Síochána's Spontaneous Pursuits Policy and associated procedure documents and found no apparent evidence of misconduct or criminal behaviour by gardaí. On this basis of Fiosrú's findings, the investigation was discontinued.

Driver of stolen car injured following crash

Incident

Gardaí responded to a report of an intruder in a domestic residence. On arrival at the scene, the gardaí observed a car driving off at speed. The vehicle pulled in and gardaí approached it in their patrol car. The vehicle then drove towards the patrol car, narrowly passing it and began driving on the wrong side of the road. Gardai activated the emergency blue lights and sirens but then decided to deactivate them and continued to follow the car at a distance. The car crashed into a road sign. The driver was taken to hospital and suffered two broken legs. It later became known that the car was stolen.

Investigation

Fiosrú investigators obtained accounts from the two gardaí involved. The investigators attended the hospital and met with the injured person who did not engage with the investigation. Photographs of the scene, CCTV footage and Garda TETRA secure radio recordings were collected and reviewed.

Outcome

The Fiosrú investigation found no apparent breach of An Garda Síochána's Spontaneous Pursuits Policy and associated procedure documents. The Fiosrú investigation found that the garda driver had the required CBD 2 training level for emergency response driving and had followed the correct process for the pursuit of vehicles. The investigation found that the gardaí acted in accordance with their duties.

Fiosrú did not find apparent evidence of misconduct or criminal behaviour by gardaí. On this basis, the investigation was discontinued.

Off-duty garda fined after pleading guilty to careless driving

Incident

An off-duty garda was involved in a road traffic collision with another vehicle. The garda's car was overtaking a vehicle when it collided head-on with a second vehicle. The garda was seriously injured. The passengers in the other vehicle, including a 13-year-old child, were taken to hospital.

Investigation

Fiosrú investigators examined and photographed the scene of the collision. Fiosrú investigators interviewed a witness and one of the passengers of the other vehicle and recorded reports from two garda witnesses. As part of the investigation, medical evidence was obtained and Fiosrú sent the vehicles involved for examination by a Garda Public Service Vehicle inspector who found no mechanical defects in either vehicle which would have contributed to the collision. The garda was interviewed by Fiosrú under caution.

Outcome

The Fiosrú investigation found evidence of dangerous driving by the garda contrary to section 53 of the Road Traffic Act 1961.

Fiosrú sent an investigation file to the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP). The DPP directed the prosecution of the garda for dangerous driving. Before the case was scheduled to be heard, the garda pleaded guilty to the lesser offence of careless driving, which was accepted by the DPP. The judge imposed a €500 fine.

4. Death or Serious Harm in or following Garda Custody

In 2025, there were eight referrals relating to incidents of death or serious harm in or following garda custody involving eight people. These referrals involved six deceased people and two injured people.

The category of garda custody includes incidents of death or serious harm that happen while a person is being arrested or taken into custody, is in custody, or that happen following a period in custody. This category includes incidents involving the death or serious harm of people who have been detained by gardaí under section 12 of the Mental Health Act 2001. The death or serious harm may have taken place in a Garda station or on private premises, in a public place, or in a Garda car or another vehicle.

This category does not include:

- **Apparent suicides that occur during or after a person is released from garda custody. These are included in the apparent and attempted suicides category.**

Demographics and other factors

All eight deceased or injured people were men.

There were five people in the 41 to 50 years age group, making this the largest age group. Two young people were in the 18 to 24 age range in this category. Of the total of six people who died, one was a young man in the 18 to 24 years age group. There were no children under 18 or people over 50 years of age in this category.

Three people were documented as suffering from mental health difficulties. The types of mental health difficulties included bipolar disorder, depression and psychosis.

In six referrals, alcohol was reported as a factor. In three referrals, drugs were reported as a factor. This means that at the time of the arrest the deceased or injured person had recently consumed, were intoxicated by, in possession of, or had known issues with alcohol and/or drugs.

Homelessness was a factor in three of the referrals. Two people were experiencing homelessness at the time of the incident and one person had a history of periods of homelessness.

Preliminary cause of death

The preliminary cause of death as provided by the pathologist following a post-mortem examination is recorded by Fiosrú. This is taken from the post mortem report, where available. In some cases, this will have been provided by the pathologist to the Fiosrú investigator and recorded in Fiosrú's case notes.

The preliminary cause of death was recorded by Fiosrú in five of the referrals. These were:

- Mixed drug and alcohol intoxication
- Drowning
- Cardiac arrythmia due to mixed drug intoxication and background health issues
- Pan-cerebellar haemorrhagic necrosis (vascular)
- Manual compression on the neck whilst restrained

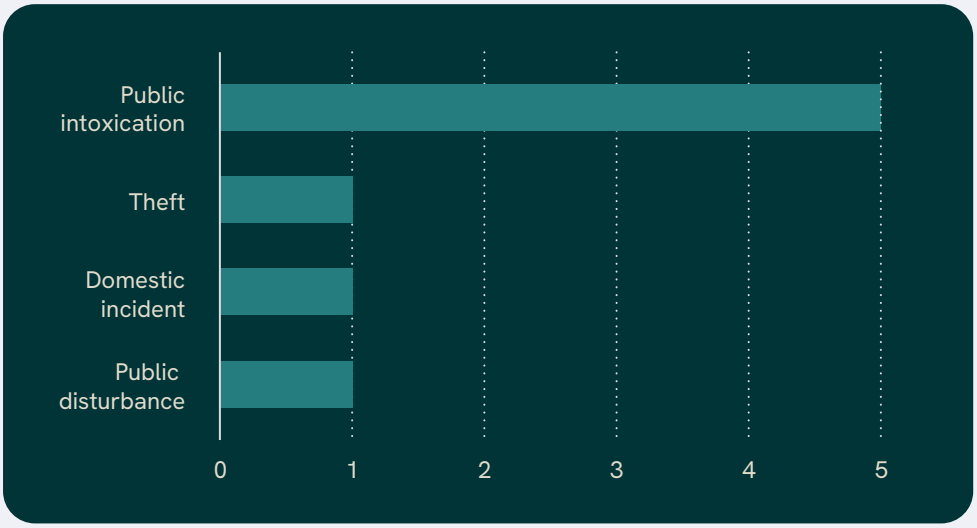
The preliminary cause of death in the sixth referred incident was recorded as 'unknown'.

Reason for contact with gardaí

The most prevalent reason why gardaí initially came into contact with the deceased or injured people in the garda custody referral category was because the people were found to be intoxicated in a public place, giving rise to concerns that they may endanger themselves or others. This is followed by a reported theft, domestic incident and public disturbance.

Chart 7 shows the reasons for contact for referrals of death or serious harm in custody.

Chart 7:
Reason for contact with gardaí in referrals relating to garda custody



Reason for detention by gardaí

Table 6 lists the statutory reasons why gardaí detained the eight people included in the garda custody category. No individuals were detained under section 12 of the Mental Health Act 2001. The most common reason for detention was the offence of public intoxication, recorded in six referrals.

Table 6 sets out the reason for detention for seven out of the eight deceased or injured people detained in this category.

One person was in the process of arrest when it became apparent that they were unwell. This person was immediately taken to hospital where they died a short time later. Due to how this incident unfolded, the statute under which the person was detained was not recorded.

Circumstances of death or serious harm

Of the eight referrals of death or serious harm during or following garda custody, five incidents took place in a Garda station cell.

- One person died in a cell from intoxication.
- Two people became unresponsive in a cell and were brought to hospital where they died.
- Two people were seriously injured in a cell and were brought to hospital where they recovered.
- One incident involved a person who was unwell prior to the scene of arrest. The person was taken directly to hospital from the scene of arrest where they were pronounced dead.
- Two incidents took place following a persons release from garda custody. The preliminary cause of death was drowning in one of these referrals and unknown in the remaining referral.

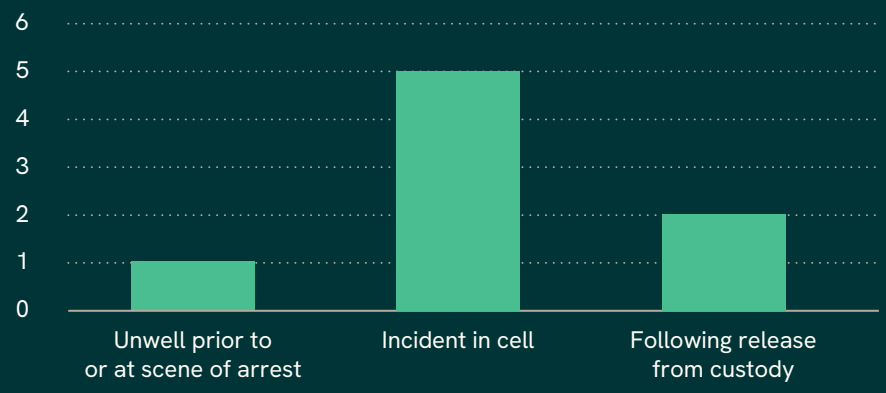
Table 6: Reason for detention in referrals relating to garda custody

Reason for detention	Number of people
Section 4 Criminal Justice (Public Order) Act 1994 - Public intoxication	5
Section 4 and 6 Criminal Justice (Public Order) Act 1994 - Public intoxication	1
Section 4 Criminal Justice (Theft and Fraud Offences) Act 2001 - Theft	1
Total	**7**

Fiosrú's specialist interviewing for vulnerable people, children and victims

To enhance the level of service Fiosrú provides to victims, including those who are the most vulnerable, some investigators are trained and experienced in specialist interview skills. Fiosrú also has access to a network of interview suites across the country which provide a neutral and comfortable setting. In certain circumstances, this may lead to victims later being able to provide their evidence to a court via either a pre-recorded or live video rather than giving evidence in person. Other special measures are also available from the Courts Service depending on the specifics of the case. Fiosrú's investigators are able to advise on these when the circumstances arise.

Chart 8:
Circumstances of death or serious harm in referrals relating to garda custody



Outcomes of concluded investigations

Man dies following release from custody after arrest for theft

Incident

Gardaí arrested a man for the theft of a coat from a busy city centre shop during winter. The man was experiencing homelessness at the time and stated that he had taken the coat without paying for it as he was cold. No force was used during the arrest. The man was brought to a Garda station where he was charged with theft contrary to Section 4 of the Criminal Justice (Theft and Fraud Offences) Act 2001 and was released on bail a few hours later. When leaving the Garda station, the man stated that he was cold and was given some additional clothing by gardaí. The man was found deceased the following day.

Investigation

Fiosrú investigators obtained and reviewed CCTV footage, mapping the deceased man's last movements. A Fiosrú investigator attended the shop to speak with security staff who had interacted with the man. The investigators also identified and spoke with people who had come into contact with the man following his release from custody. Investigators took statements and obtained Garda notebook entries from the gardaí involved. Custody records and custody risk assessments were also obtained and checked. Fiosrú investigators engaged with the State Pathologist to confirm the post mortem findings.

Outcome

The Fiosrú investigation found no apparent breach of An Garda Síochána's Custody Regulations and that the man was regularly checked while in custody. The investigation ruled out any third-party involvement in the man's death and found that the gardaí had a lawful basis and reasonable grounds to arrest the man and take him into custody. The investigation found that the man had not said or done anything to indicate to gardaí that there were any concerns for his safety or mental health when he was released from custody.

Fiosrú found that there was no evidence of misconduct or criminal behaviour by gardaí. On this basis, the investigation was discontinued.

Garda disciplined for record-keeping failings in referral of death of woman in custody

Incident

Gardaí arrested a woman for public intoxication at a service station and brought her to a Garda station. The woman had three outstanding bench warrants. For this reason, the woman was detained in a Garda cell to facilitate her attendance at the next session of the Court. While in the Garda cell, the woman requested to see a doctor. Gardaí called a doctor who attended the station and reviewed the woman four times. On the morning that the woman was due to attend Court, she was found unresponsive in her cell. Gardaí began CPR on the woman and called an ambulance. The doctor pronounced the woman dead in the cell an hour later.

Investigation

Fiosrú investigators attended the scene two hours after receiving the referral from An Garda Síochána. The investigators examined and photographed the scene and requested CCTV footage from the Garda station. Fiosrú investigators obtained accounts from gardaí who were present in the Garda station and collected custody records, risk assessments and post mortem results.

The actions of gardaí were examined against An Garda Síochána's Custody Regulations. After an in-depth analysis of the CCTV footage from the Garda station and the custody records, a potential breach of discipline was identified.

Outcome

The Fiosrú investigation found that while the preliminary cause of death was due to underlying health conditions, the times recorded on the custody record showing when the garda checked on the woman did not align with the visits captured in the CCTV footage. The garda responsible for checking on the woman had made false entries on the custody record stating that he had visited the woman more times that he had and with incorrect times. Fiosrú sent a recommendation to the Garda Commissioner for disciplinary proceedings for a neglect of duty and making entries in the custody record with the knowledge that they were false or misleading. An Garda Síochána found the garda to be in breach of discipline and imposed disciplinary sanctions.

Man dies following arrest and detention for public intoxication

Incident

Gardaí arrested a man for public intoxication and brought him to a Garda station in a city suburb. On arrival at the Garda station, the man was unwell and a doctor was immediately called. The doctor arrived one hour later and directed that the man be brought to hospital. Gardaí called an ambulance but the man became unresponsive before it arrived. The man was brought to hospital where he died a number of days later.

Investigation

Fiosrú investigators took statements from the gardaí involved and from medical staff who treated the man in the hospital. The investigators collected and reviewed CCTV footage from the Garda station, as well as custody records, medical notes and post mortem findings.

Outcome

The Fiosrú investigation found no apparent breach of An Garda Síochána's Custody Regulations. The CCTV footage showed that the gardaí conducted appropriate custody checks, checking on the man frequently while he was in the Garda cell and within the required time frames for checks on intoxicated persons. The investigation found that the man's death was not trauma-related and was not the result of any actions or omissions of the gardaí.
Fiosrú did not find evidence of misconduct or criminal behaviour by gardaí. On this basis, the investigation was discontinued.

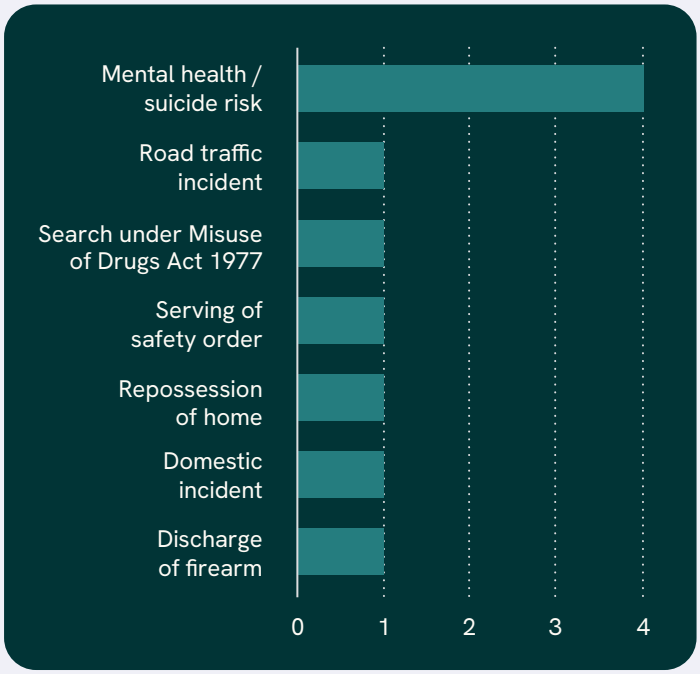
5. Apparent or Attempted Suicides

A total of ten referrals in 2025 involved an apparent or attempted suicide. This included seven apparent deaths by suicide and three attempted suicides. There were no apparent deaths by suicide or attempted suicides in garda custody in 2025.

This category includes apparent or attempted suicides that happen while in garda custody, following garda custody where the time spent in custody may be relevant to the death or serious harm, or following garda contact.

The term 'suicide' does not necessarily mean that this has been the verdict following a Coroner's inquest as in some cases the investigation is ongoing or the inquest is still pending. If Fiosrú is not requested as the lead agency to investigate, it would not have the inquest verdict and therefore this would not be recorded. In this report, the investigation is only included in this category if, after considering the nature of the incident of death or serious harm, the circumstances suggest that the death or serious harm was the intended outcome of a self-inflicted act, for example, a hanging, or where there was some evidence of 'suicidal ideation', such as a last letter or an expression of suicidal ideation, or an intent to act is recorded in custody records.

Chart 9:
Reason for contact with gardaí in referrals relating to apparent or attempted suicides



Demographics and other factors

All ten deceased or injured people were men.

Three young people between the ages of 18 to 24 were included in this category, making it the most common age group. This was followed by the 31 to 40 years (two people) and 51 to 60 years (two people) age groups. Of the seven people who died in this category, two were young men between the ages of 18 to 24. There were no children under 18 years of age in this referral category.

Six of the people were reportedly known to be experiencing mental health difficulties. Four people had no reported mental health difficulties. The types of mental health difficulties included bipolar disorder, depression and suicidal ideation.

Alcohol was a factor documented in two of the referrals and drugs were a factor in three of the referrals. This means that at the time of the deceased or injured person's interaction with gardaí, they had recently consumed, were intoxicated by, in possession of, or had known issues with alcohol and/or drugs.

Homelessness was a factor in two of the referrals. One person was experiencing homelessness at the time of their death and one person had a known history of periods of homelessness.

Reason for contact with gardaí

Of the ten referrals in the category of apparent or attempted suicide, the most common reason for contact with gardaí was mental health/suicide risk in four referrals. The other reasons for contact were: a road traffic incident; a search under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1977; the serving of a safety order; the repossession of a home; a domestic incident and the discharge of a firearm in one referral each.

Chart 9 shows the reason for the deceased or injured person's contact with gardaí.

Reason for detention by gardaí

Out of the ten referrals in this category, one involved arrest and detention by gardaí. The deceased person had been arrested and detained under section 5 of the Road Traffic Act 2010.

Circumstances of death or serious harm

Five of the apparent or attempted suicides took place in a domestic residence. Five happened in public places. These included nine apparent or attempted suicides following garda contact and one following garda custody.

Fiosrú's role in the Coroner's Court

Coroners are independent judicial officers whose role is to determine the cause and circumstances of a death. Whenever the cause of someone's death is unknown, violent or unusual, the Coroner will order an inquest which is a legal enquiry into the death. The Coroner must hold an inquest if the death occurred in or following custody. Only a Coroner can order an inquest.

The Coroner will typically hold an inquest into any death involving gardaí and where there has been garda contact prior to the death, particularly if the death occurred under suspicious or violent circumstances.

While Fiosrú investigates the actions of the gardaí, the Coroner investigates the cause of death. Fiosrú's investigators liaise with the Coroner and can conduct inquiries on behalf of the Coroner at their request which may include providing information and evidence. This allows the Coroner to decide whether Fiosrú or An Garda Síochána will be the lead agency to investigate the death.

For inquest cases, Fiosrú investigators prepare an investigation report for the Coroner and share information. Statements taken by Fiosrú during an investigation into a death are transcribed in the form of depositions to be read into evidence at the inquest. In addition, Fiosrú can, at the request of the Coroner, act as a Coroner's officer. This means that Fiosrú will conduct enquiries and assists the Coroner with the administration of the jury selection process.

6. Death or Serious Harm following Garda Contact

In 2025, there were six referrals of incidents of death or serious harm following garda contact, involving four deceased people and two injured people.

The category of garda contact comprises of incidents of deaths and serious harm that follow contact with the gardaí that did not involve arrest, or detention under section 12 of the Mental Health Act 2001.

Demographics and other factors

Of the six people included in this category, one was a woman and five were men.

The most common age was 41 to 50 years (two people). There was one young person under 25 years of age in this category and no children under 18 years of age.

One referral involved a person with a mental health difficulty. The types of mental health difficulties recorded were bipolar disorder, schizophrenia and suicidal ideation.

Alcohol was recorded as a factor in three of the referrals. Drugs were recorded as a factor in one of the referrals.

Forensic Evidence Gathering

Fiosrú investigators are trained and experienced in various levels of forensic and evidence gathering capability in such areas as crime scene management, exhibit handling, photography, the investigation of serious and fatal road traffic collisions and searches. For the forensic examination of scenes, Fiosrú can call on additional resources from scenes of crime officers and the Garda National Technical Bureau.

Digital Investigations Unit

Coroners are independent judicial officers Fiosrú's Digital Investigations Unit provides specialist digital support for its investigations. The digital specialists in the unit are experts in evidence recovery and the analysis of digital data from devices such as body-worn cameras, mobile phones and laptop computers. The unit's work involves unlocking devices for information extractions, rebuilding corrupt files where damage or attempted deletion may have occurred and detection of material that may have been edited, AI generated or altered. It can enhance, authenticate and preserve audio and video material for trials and inquests.

Preliminary cause of death

The preliminary cause of death as provided by the pathologist following a post-mortem examination is recorded by Fiosrú. This is taken from the post mortem report, where available. In some cases, this will have been provided by the pathologist to the Fiosrú investigator and recorded in Fiosrú's case notes.

The preliminary cause of death was recorded by Fiosrú in two of the referrals. These were:

- Catastrophic brain injury and fractured skull
- Gunshot wounds
- Hypothermia

The preliminary cause of death in the one remaining death was recorded as 'unknown'.

Reason for contact with gardaí

Table 7 outlines the reasons captured for the deceased or injured person's contact with gardaí.

Table 7: Reason for contact in referrals relating to garda contact

Reason for contact	Number of people
Assault	1
Domestic incident	1
Intoxication	1
Missing person	1
Public disturbance	1
Witness interview	1
Total	**6**

Outcomes of concluded investigations

Man injured following fall from roof as gardaí respond to a domestic incident

Incident

Gardaí responded to a number of 999 calls reporting a domestic incident. When gardaí arrived, the man involved fled through the back of the house. A short while later, the man returned and locked himself in the upstairs bathroom. Gardaí tried to speak with the man but he climbed out the bathroom window and onto the roof. The man slipped and fell from the roof of the house, sustaining a head injury. The gardaí called an ambulance and the man was brought to hospital where he and subsequently recovered from his injuries.

Investigation

Fiosrú investigators attended, examined and photographed the scene of the incident. The investigators collected accounts from the gardaí involved. Fiosrú investigators also obtained and reviewed recordings of the 999 calls made reporting the domestic incident and those made by gardaí requesting an ambulance.

Outcome

The investigation found that gardaí had responded appropriately to the 999 call reporting a domestic incident. The investigation found that no act or omission of gardaí led to the injury. The gardaí conducted first aid on the injured person after they fell from the roof and called for an ambulance.

The investigation did not find any evidence of misconduct or criminal offences. On this basis, the investigation was discontinued.

Off-duty garda pleads guilty to assault

Incident

An off-duty garda was socialising in a public house in the early hours of the morning. The garda engaged in a physical altercation with a young man. During this altercation, the garda fractured the young man's nose.

Investigation

Fiosrú investigators obtained accounts from staff at the public house and other witnesses, as well as two garda witnesses. The investigators collected and analysed CCTV footage, photographs of the scene and medical records.

Outcome

The Fiosrú investigation found that there was evidence to suggest that the garda may have committed a criminal offence. Fiosrú sent a file to the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) and the garda was suspended. The DPP directed a prosecution and the garda pleaded guilty to assault under section 2 of the Non-Fatal Offences Against the Person Act 1997. The garda resigned before the Court case was concluded. The Court applied section 1(1) of the Probation Offenders Act 1907 requiring the former garda to be of good behaviour for one year, not to contact the injured man and to compensate financially the man and pay €500 to the Court.

7. Sexual Offences

In 2025, there were five referrals involving a person who is a victim of a sexual offence. These involved five victims.

This category comprises incidents of serious harm where a person is a victim of a sexual offence.

A sexual offence for the purpose of a referral is defined in the Schedule of the Sex Offenders Act 2001. The offences include rape, sexual assault or other offences of a sexual nature. The full list of offences is included in Appendix C.

Demographics

All five victims were women.

Three of the victims were young people in the 18 to 24 years age group. A further one victim was in the 25 to 30 years age group and the remaining victim was in the 41 to 50 years age group.

Three of the victims were serving gardaí.

Circumstance of serious harm

Three incidents of sexual offences were reported to have occurred in private residences, one in a public place and one in a Garda car.

One incident of a sexual offence involved intimate partners.

Three of the incidents of sexual offences involved two serving gardaí. One incident occurred while the two gardaí were on duty. Two incidents occurred while the two gardaí were off duty.

In all five incidents, the sexual offence was reported to gardaí by the victim.

Specialist Services Unit for DSGBV Investigations

Fiosrú's Specialist Services Unit (SSU) investigates incidents, including public complaints, where a garda is accused of either perpetrating or failing to investigate incidents including domestic violence, coercive control, abuse of power for sexual purposes, child sexual abuse and sexual assaults.

The SSU's Investigating Officers are trained in interviewing victims who may present as vulnerable. The formation of the specialist unit ensures that complaints of this nature made to Fiosrú are handled by dedicated and highly trained staff who can respond with the appropriate sensitivity and expertise.

Fiosrú's offices have specialist facilities for interviewing children and vulnerable adults, and Fiosrú also has access to a network of such State facilities across the country.

Human rights lawyer and advocate, Noeline Blackwell, was appointed in December 2025 to assist Fiosrú as an expert adviser on domestic, sexual and gender-based violence (DSGBV). Ms Blackwell is a former CEO of Dublin Rape Crisis Centre and a serving member of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission. Her expertise assists Fiosrú's work in refining and improving processes and protocols for investigating complaints and dealing with victims. Fiosrú also initiated a staff development and improved service delivery project with the charity Women's Aid, which works to prevent and address the impact of domestic violence and abuse including coercive control. Fiosrú supports the Third National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence (2022-2026) by ensuring strong oversight of An Garda Síochána for issues involving DSGBV.

8. Abuse of Power for a Sexual Purpose

In 2025, there was one referral involving a person who is a victim of an abuse of power for a sexual purpose. This referral involved one victim.

This category comprises of incidents of serious harm where a person is a victim of an abuse of power for a sexual purpose.

Abuse of power for a sexual purpose is any behaviour by garda that takes advantage of their position to abuse their position, authority or powers for a sexual purpose or an improper emotional relationship with a person.

The definition of the abuse of power for a sexual purpose, as provided for in Section 193(1) of the Policing, Security and Community Safety Act 2024, is included in Appendix C.

Abuse of power for a sexual purpose is not a criminal offence. It can take a variety of forms, including conduct which may amount to a criminal offence.

An Garda Síochána's 2026 policy document, *Professional Boundaries and Abuse of Power for Sexual Purpose*, acknowledges that abuse of power can have extremely serious consequences for an individual and for society as a whole.

It states:

"An Garda Síochána has an obligation to protect people from the risks and effects of corrupt behaviour within the Organisation and to pursue, prosecute and disrupt any form of corruption that impacts upon the delivery of a quality policing service to the community in which we serve. Garda Personnel who attempt to abuse their power either for sexual purpose or to attempt to establish a relationship beyond a professional capacity, risk breaching the trust and confidence of the public and negatively impact on the reputation and integrity of An Garda Síochána."

Gardaí are advised that the policy and accompanying procedure does not constrain Garda personnel from forming professional relationships with members of the public. Indeed, it states, they are encouraged to build professional relationships with members of the public; relationships which are compatible with the values and ethical standards of the organisation. The policy also states that, as is the case in many work settings, it is not unusual for personal, emotional and/or sexual relationships to develop between Garda personnel.

"This Policy (and accompanying Procedure) does not attempt to prevent or restrict relationships from developing between colleagues. It is, however, important to consider whether an imbalance of power, vulnerability or conflict of interest may exist within any such relationship. Where one, or more of these may exist, the accompanying Procedures provide a framework for self-referral by Garda Personnel."

9. Conclusion

This thematic report provides information and analysis on the incidents that led to referrals of death and serious harm involving contact with gardaí in 2025.

By categorising the circumstances and documenting trends and patterns across referrals, the findings aim to contribute to a clearer understanding of the contexts in which these incidents arise. This report's aim is to promote and inform debate, discussion and policy. The referrals included in this report were received in 2025 and were dealt with under two pieces of legislation.

The referrals received between 1 January 2025 and 1 April 2025 were dealt with under the Garda Síochána Act 2005 and the respective definition of 'serious harm'. From 2 April 2025, the referrals were dealt with under the Policing, Security and Community Safety Act 2024. Section 193 of the Policing, Security and Community Safety Act 2024 expanded the definition of 'serious harm' to include sexual offences and the abuse of power for sexual purpose.

This was the first of Fiosrú's Incidents of Death and Serious Harm reports to include referrals received under this expanded definition that includes incidents in which an act or omission of a garda may have led to a person being a victim of a sexual offence or a victim of an abuse of power for a sexual purpose. Two new categories are included in this report to reflect these types of referrals.

This is the last report that will include statistics on referrals made to Fiosrú by gardaí under the Garda Síochána Act 2005.

Fiosrú's publication of data on referrals on an annual basis is part of its new statutory research function under section 173 (2)(j) of the Policing, Security and Community Safety Act 2024. This law requires Fiosrú "to undertake research and analysis in order to identify trends and patterns arising from the performance of his or her functions".

Fiosrú's next annual report into incidents of death and serious harm involving contact with An Garda Síochána, covering data for 2026, will be published in autumn 2027.

Appendix A:

Additional Tables

Table A1: Referrals of incidents by category and year

Categories of incidents of death and serious harm	2024*	2025
Road traffic incident	13	9
Garda custody	8	8
Apparent or attempted suicide	10	10
Garda contact	6	6
Sexual offence	-	5
Abuse of power for a sexual purpose	-	1
Total	**37**	**39**

* *All 37 referrals received in 2024 were made and investigated under the provisions of the Garda Síochána Act 2005 including its definition of 'serious harm'. Of the 39 referrals received in 2025, nine were dealt with under the 2005 statute, and 30 were dealt with under the Policing, Security and Community Safety Act 2024 which entered into force on 2 April 2025. The Policing, Security and Community Safety Act 2024 includes an expanded definition of 'serious harm' to encompass where a person is the victim of a sexual offence or an abuse of power for sexual purpose. Two new referral categories were introduced in 2025 to take account of the widened definition.*

Appendix B:

Methodology and Definitions

This Appendix presents detailed information on how Fiosrú collates and categorises referrals of death and serious harm for inclusion in this report. There is also detailed information on the definitions used for this report.

Data collation

A list of all referrals of death and serious harm is extracted from Fiosrú's internal case management system (Perito). Each case is manually checked in order to ensure there are no duplications or incorrectly categorised cases. The research officer reviews each referral manually and extracts the required data. The research officer then manually inputs the information required into Excel. A two-step validation process completed following the collection of the required data ensures that all data captured is accurate.

Categorising data

Referrals are categorised based on the information available from referral documents, investigation reports, statements and post mortems. Where information is unknown or unclear from the data available to the research officer, this is sought from the relevant Fiosrú investigator. The figures are based on the referrals received between 1 January 2025 and 31 December 2025. The date of referral is the reference point to determine the inclusion of the case in this report.

Referrals are organised into categories:

- Road traffic incident
- Death or serious harm in or following garda custody
- Apparent or attempted suicide
- Death or serious harm following garda contact
- Sexual offence
- Abuse of power for a sexual purpose
- Discharge of a firearm or other weapon

Definitions

Death and serious harm categories

Referrals of incidents of death and serious harm are separated into the following seven categories that broadly align with those used by other police oversight bodies and take into account the expanded definition of serious harm in the Policing, Security and Community Safety Act 2024.

Road Traffic Incident

The category of road traffic incident includes referrals of death and serious harm of drivers, passengers, pedestrians or other road users arising from garda traffic-related activity, including pursuits. RTIs involving an off duty garda as the driver are also included.

This does not include:

- Deaths or serious harm that happen following a road traffic incident where the gardaí attend immediately after the event as an emergency service.
- Death or serious harm from road traffic incidents where the gardaí had no involvement in the road traffic incident but happened to be in contact with the deceased or injured person a short time prior to the incident.

Death or Serious Harm in or following Garda Custody

This category includes deaths or serious harm that happen while a person is being arrested or taken into garda custody or that happen following a period in custody. This category includes deaths or serious harm of people who have been detained by gardaí under section 12 of the Mental Health Act 2001. The death or serious harm may have taken place on Garda or private premises, in a public place, or in a Garda car or other vehicles.

This does not include:

- **Apparent suicides that occur during or after a person is released from garda custody. These are included in the apparent or attempted suicide category.**

Apparent or Attempted Suicide

The category of apparent or attempted suicide includes deaths by suicide or attempted suicides that happen while in garda custody, following garda custody where the time spent in custody may be relevant to the death or serious harm, or following garda contact. The term 'suicide' does not necessarily relate to a Coroner's verdict as in most cases, inquest verdicts are still pending. In these instances, the case is only included if, after considering the nature of death or serious harm, the circumstances suggest that the death or serious harm was the intended outcome of a self-inflicted act, for example, a hanging, or where there was some evidence of 'suicidal ideation', such as a last letter.

Death or Serious Harm following Garda Contact

The category of death or serious harm following garda contact includes deaths or serious harm that follow contact with the gardaí that did not involve arrest, or detention under s12 of the Mental Health Act 2001.

Sexual Offence

The category comprises incidents of serious harm where a person is a victim of a sexual offence.

A sexual offence for the purpose of a referral is defined in the Schedule of the Sex Offenders Act 2001. The offences include rape, sexual assault or other offences of a sexual nature. The full list of offences is included in Appendix C.

Abuse of Power for a Sexual Purpose

This category comprises incidents of serious harm where a person is a victim of an abuse of power for a sexual purpose.

Abuse of power for a sexual purpose is any behaviour where a garda takes advantage of their position to misuse their position, authority or powers for a sexual purpose or an improper emotional relationship with a person.

The definition of the abuse of power for a sexual purpose, as provided for in Section 193(1) of the Policing, Security and Community Safety Act 2024, is included in Appendix C.

Abuse of power for a sexual purpose is not in itself a criminal offence. It can take a variety of forms, including conduct which may amount to a criminal offence.

Discharge of a Firearm or Other Weapon

This category is comprised of incidents of death and serious harm where a garda discharged a conventional firearm. It also includes less lethal weapons such as an air gun or stun gun and a conducted energy device, such as a Taser, as defined in the Firearms Act 1925 (as amended). We have changed the way this category is presented in this report. In the 2024 report, the category was called fatal or non-fatal shooting. This has been renamed to discharge of a firearm or other weapon to also incorporate the use of less lethal weapons.

This category does not include:

- **Incidents of death or serious harm that include the use of OC spray (Oleoresin Capsicum, also known as pepper spray).**

Reason for contact

For each referral included in this report, the reason for contact with gardaí is recorded. The categories are defined to capture and convey the initial basis for the deceased or injured persons engagement with An Garda Síochána. This categorisation aims to reflect the primary circumstance that led to the deceased or injured persons contact with gardaí. Where multiple factors were present, the most immediate or initiating reason for contact is selected to ensure consistency and comparability across referrals. The categorisation process was guided by a review of the case files.

The deceased or injured person may have come into contact with gardaí for allegedly committing an offence (for example, the gardaí come across a vehicle being driven in a dangerous manner and they attempt to stop the driver) or due to life circumstances that have left them vulnerable or in crises (such as alcohol or drug dependency or domestic violence).

Mental health

The mental health marker is selected on a case if the deceased or injured person has been detained under the Mental Health Act 2001, is a patient at a psychiatric hospital, or if the individual is reported as having current or historical mental health issues. If the person is known to have previously attempted suicide or is reported to be suffering from depression or another mental health illness, the mental health factor would also be selected. Information on mental health may be drawn from information received from the gardaí at the point of referral, self-reported information by the deceased or injured parties or evidence provided by the medical staff or people known to the deceased.

The term "mental health difficulty" is used throughout this report and is taken from Stand Up to Stigma: Changing the language we use when talking about mental health. This guide was published by See Change, Ireland's National Mental Health Stigma Reduction Partnership, in 2020. It advises that:

"Mental health difficulty may be used when we need to describe mental health issues or mental illness generally. We can have trouble defining a mental health issue or illness in everyday conversation. Using the term mental health difficulty helps bridge the gap and respects everyone's lived experience."

Alcohol

The alcohol factor is marked if the deceased or injured person had recently consumed or was intoxicated with alcohol at the time of arrest or contact with the gardaí. It is also marked if the cause of death or serious harm is linked to alcohol, or if the deceased or injured person has current or historical issues with alcohol. The relevance of alcohol may be deemed from information provided at the time of referral form from the gardaí or from information that is identified during the investigation.

Drugs

The drugs factor is applied to cases where the deceased or injured person had recently consumed drugs, was under the influence of drugs, had a history of drug abuse (either of illegal or prescription drugs, where they are abused), or was found to be in possession of illegal drugs at the time of arrest or contact with the gardaí. It is also selected if the cause of death or serious harm is related to drugs either illegal or prescription drugs), including long-term misuse, overdose or where drug packages may have burst or are lodged in airways. The prevalence of drugs may be identified from information on the referral form from the gardaí or from the case description and investigation.

Homelessness

The homelessness marker is selected if the deceased or injured person is experiencing homelessness at the time of the incident referred for investigation, or has experienced homelessness or periods of homelessness in the past. This information may be taken from statements, case notes or investigation reports.

Preliminary cause of death

When a referral relates to a death, the preliminary cause of death is recorded, where available. This refers to the preliminary cause of death according to the Pathologist. This is taken from the post mortem report, where available to Fiosrú.

In some cases, the preliminary cause of death will have been provided verbally by the Pathologist to the Investigator and recorded in case notes. In cases where it is decided that Fiosrú does not have primacy after initial investigation, the results of any post mortem would not be routinely provided to Fiosrú. In these cases, the cause of death is recorded as "Unknown".

Victims

In the categories of sexual offence and abuse of power for a sexual purpose the injured person is referred to in this report as the 'victim'. The term 'victim' is used in accordance with the definition in section 193 of the Policing, Security and Community Safety Act 2024, which provides that serious harm of a person includes where:

> "he or she is the victim of a sexual offence, or
>
> he or she is the victim of an abuse of power for a sexual purpose"

The Criminal Justice (Victims of Crime) Act 2017 applies to investigations conducted by Fiosrú.

Section 2 of the Act defines victim as "a natural person who has suffered harm, including physical, mental or emotional harm or economic loss, which was directly caused by an offence."

Section 4(2) of the Act states that:

> "The application of this Act is not dependent on the commission of an offence having to be established (nor is it dependent on establishing whether the person concerned suffered any harm caused by an offence)."

This means that a person has a right to be treated as a victim, and Fiosrú has obligations to uphold this, regardless as to whether a prosecution has been initiated or not.

Abuse of power for a sexual purpose is not in itself a criminal offence. It can take a variety of forms, including conduct which may amount to a criminal offence.

Appendix C:

Statutory Definitions and Instruments

Serious Harm - Section 193 of the Policing, Security and Community Safety Act 2024

Serious harm in relation to a person means—

(a) an injury to the person that—

(i) creates a substantial risk of death,

(ii) causes serious disfigurement, or

(iii) causes substantial loss or impairment of mobility of the body as a whole or of the function of any particular bodily member or organ,

(b) he or she is the victim of a sexual offence, or

(c) he or she is the victim of an abuse of power for a sexual purpose;

"sexual offence" has the same meaning as it has in the Sex Offenders Act 2001

Sexual Offence - Schedule, Sex Offenders Act 2001 (as amended)

Sexual Offences for Purpose of Act

1. Rape.
2. Sexual assault (whether the offence of which the person was convicted was known by that name or by the name "Indecent assault upon a female person" or "Indecent assault upon a male person").
3. Aggravated sexual assault (within the meaning of section 3 of the Act of 1990).
4. Rape under section 4 of the Act of 1990.
5. An offence under section 1 of the Act of 1908 (incest by males).
6. An offence under section 2 of the Act of 1908 (incest by females of or over 17 years of age).
7. An offence under the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2006.

7A. An offence under section 1 of the Act of 1935 (defilement of girl under 15 years of age).

8. An offence under section 2 of the Act of 1935 (defilement of girl between 15 and 17 years of age).
9. The offence of buggery with a person or with an animal referred to in section 61 of the Act of 1861.
10. The offence of an attempt to commit such buggery referred to in section 62 of the Act of 1861.
11. An offence under section 3 of the Act of 1993 (buggery of persons under 17 years of age).
12. An offence under section 4 of the Act of 1993 (gross indecency with males under 17 years of age).
13. An offence under section 11 of the Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1885 (acts of gross indecency).
14. An offence under section 5 of the Act of 1993 (protection of mentally impaired persons).
15. An offence under section 4 of the Act of 1935 (defilement of mentally impaired females).
16. An offence under any of the following provisions of the Child Trafficking and Pornography Act, 1998 —

(a) section 3 (child trafficking and taking, etc., child for sexual exploitation),

(b) section 4 (allowing child to be used for child pornography),

(ba) section 4A (child prostitution and child pornography);

(c) section 5 (producing, distributing, etc., child pornography),

(ca) section 5A (participation of child in pornographic performance);

(d) section 6 (possession of child pornography).

16A. An offence under the Criminal Law (Human Trafficking) Act 2008 in so far as the offence is committed for the purposes of the sexual exploitation of a person.

17. An offence under section 2 of the Sexual Offences (Jurisdiction) Act, 1996 (sexual offences committed outside the State).

17A. An offence under the following provisions of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017:

(a) section 3 (obtaining, providing etc. a child for purpose of sexual exploitation);

(b) section 4 (invitation etc. to sexual touching);

(c) section 5 (sexual activity in presence of child);

(d) section 6 (causing child to watch sexual activity);

(e) section 7 (meeting child for purpose of sexual exploitation);

(f) section 8 (use of information and communication technology to facilitate sexual exploitation of child);

(g) section 21 (sexual act with protected person);

(h) section 22 (offence against relevant person by person in authority).

18. An offence consisting of attempting to commit an offence referred to in any of paragraphs 1 to 17 of this Schedule (other than such an offence that itself consists of an attempt to do a particular act).

19. An offence consisting of aiding, abetting, counselling, procuring or inciting the commission of an offence referred to in any of paragraphs 1 to 18 of this Schedule.

20. An offence consisting of conspiracy to commit an offence referred to in any foregoing paragraph of this Schedule.

21. An offence under section 6 (inserted by section 2 of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) (Amendment) Act 2007) of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 1993.

Abuse of Power for a Sexual Purpose - Section 193(1), Policing, Security and Community Safety Act 2024

"'Abuse of power for a sexual purpose' means any behaviour by a member of garda personnel which takes advantage of his or her position as such a member to misuse his or her position, authority or powers for a sexual purpose or an improper emotional relationship with any other person."

Firearm – Section 1(1), Firearms Act 1925 (as amended)

"firearm" means—

(a) a lethal firearm or other lethal weapon of any description from which any shot, bullet or other missile can be discharged,

(b) an air gun (including an air rifle and air pistol) with a muzzle energy greater than one joule or any other weapon incorporating a barrel from which any projectile can be discharged with such a muzzle energy,

(c) a crossbow,

(d) any type of stun gun or other weapon for causing any shock or other disablement to a person by means of electricity or any other kind of energy emission,

(e) a prohibited weapon,

(f) any article which would be a firearm under any of the foregoing paragraphs or paragraph (h) but for the fact that, owing to the lack of a necessary component part or parts, or to any other defect or condition, it is incapable of discharging a shot, bullet or other missile or projectile or of causing a shock or other disablement, as the case may be,

(g) except where the context otherwise requires, any component part of any article referred to in any of the foregoing paragraphs and, without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing, the following articles shall be deemed to be such component parts:

(i) telescope sights with a light beam, or telescope sights with an electronic light amplification device or an infra-red device, designed to be fitted to a firearm specified in paragraph (a), (b), (c) or (e),

(ii) a silencer designed to be fitted to a firearm specified in paragraph (a), (b) or (e), and

(iii) any object—

(I) manufactured for use as a component in connection with the operation of a firearm, and

(II) without which it could not function as originally designed,

and

(h) a device capable of discharging blank ammunition and to be used as a starting gun or blank firing gun,

and includes a restricted firearm, unless otherwise provided or the context otherwise requires;

Victim – Section 2(1)(f) and Section 4(2), Criminal Justice (Victims of Crime) Act 2017

Section 2(1)(f) "victim" means a natural person who has suffered harm, including physical, mental or emotional harm or economic loss, which was directly caused by an offence.

Section 4(2)(2) The application of this Act is not dependent on the commission of an offence having to be established (nor is it dependent on establishing whether the person concerned suffered any harm caused by an offence).

Statutory Instruments

Reference to the Standards of Professional Behaviour Regulations 2025 in this report refers to the Policing, Security and Community Safety Act 2024 (Standards of Professional Behaviour) Regulations 2025 (S.I. No. 116/2025).

S.I. No. 116/2025 - Policing, Security and Community Safety Act 2024 (Standards of Professional Behaviour) Regulations 2025

Reference to An Garda Síochána's Custody Regulations in this report refers to the Criminal Justice Act 1984 (Treatment of Persons in Custody in Garda Síochána Stations) Regulations 1987 (S.I. No. 119 of 1987).

S.I. No. 119/1987 - Criminal Justice Act, 1984 (Treatment of Persons in Custody in Garda Síochána Stations) Regulations, 1987.

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