



Knife and Offensive Weapon Sentencing Statistics, England and Wales – 2017

Main points

20,982 offences formally dealt with by the Criminal Justice System (CJS)	 A 9% rise since 2016 in the number of offences dealt with by the CJS. This increase in part reflects the 30% increase in recorded crime for knife and offensive weapon possession offences between the years ending September 2016 and September 2017.
Conviction of a knife or offensive weapon offence is now more likely to result in some form of custodial sentence	 63% of convictions resulted in some form of custodial sentence i.e. immediate custody or suspended sentence, in 2017 - an increase from 42% in 2008.
Knife or offensive weapon sentencing and cautioning occasions are now more likely to occur alongside another offence type	 In 2017 59% of occasions includes other offence types, an increase from 45% in 2008.
The average custodial sentence length was 7.5 months	 This has risen by 2.2 months since 2008, with 38% sentenced to more than 6 months compared to 20% in 2008.
86% of adult repeat offenders received some form of custodial sentence	 When compared to 2016 this figure has risen by 2 percentage points for offenders convicted under section 28 of the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015.

This publication presents key statistics describing the trends in the number of offenders receiving cautions and convictions for knife or offensive weapon offences in England and Wales. This also includes offences involving threatening with one of these types of weapon. It should be noted that figures for the latest quarter (October to December 2017) are provisional.

We are changing how our quarterly bulletins look, and would welcome any feedback to commentary.champions@justice.gsi.gov.uk

For other feedback related to the content of this publication, please let us know at statistics.enquiries@justice.gsi.gov.uk

1. Knife and offensive weapon offences overview

20,982 offences were formally dealt with by the CJS in 2017

The number of offences dealt with by the CJS has risen by 9% since 2016. This rise in part reflects the 30% increase in recorded crime¹ for knife and offensive weapon possession offences between the years ending September 2016 and September 2017.

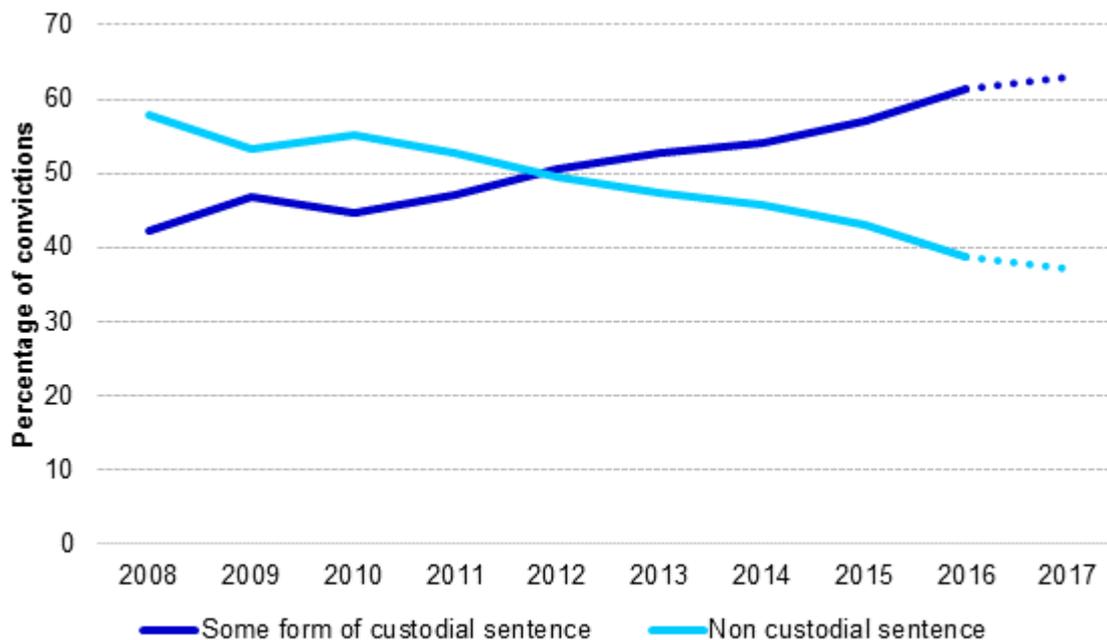
Conviction of a knife or offensive weapon offence is now more likely to result in some form of custodial sentence

63% of convictions resulted in some form of custodial sentence i.e. immediate custody or suspended sentence, in 2017 - an increase from 42% in 2008.

Knife or offensive weapon sentencing and cautioning occasions are now more likely to occur alongside another offence type

In 2008, 45% of occasions included other offence types increasing to 59% in 2017.

Figure 1: Knife and offensive weapon offence convictions by outcome, England and Wales, annually from 2008 (Source: Table 1)



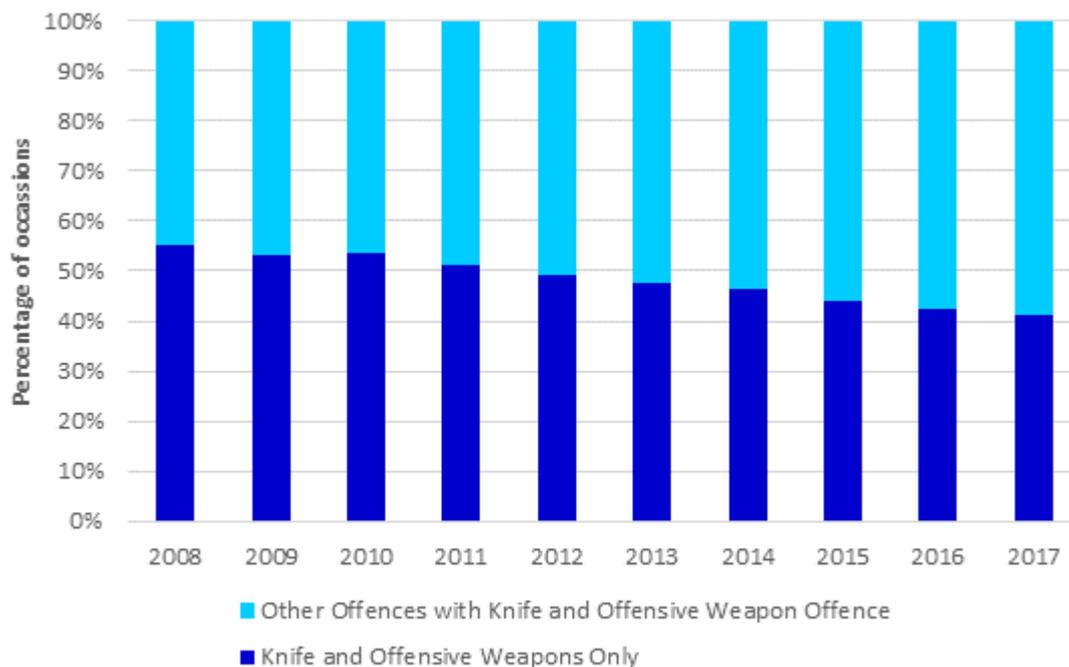
The dotted lines in the chart indicate where figures have been estimated

¹ The most recent recorded crime figures can be found at <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/crimeinenglandandwales/yearendingseptember2017>

Over time the proportion of offences convicted in court which resulted in an immediate custodial sentence has increased; in 2017 it was 41% compared to 29% in 2008. The average custodial sentence length also increased over this period from 5.3 months in 2008 to 7.5 months in 2017.

In 2017, there were 18,424 offenders and 19,158 sentencing and cautioning occasions which involved a knife or offensive weapon offence. Of which 41% involved only a knife or offensive weapon offence, whilst the other 59% also involved other types of offences.

Figure 2: Knife and offensive weapon offence sentencing and cautioning occasions, England and Wales, 2008 to 2017



In 2017, summary offences (excluding motoring), theft offences and drug offences were the most common offence types dealt with alongside knife and offensive weapon offences. These offence types have remained stable over time.

2. Cautions vs. Custodial sentences

43% of offences involving an adult and 14% of offences involving a juvenile were given an immediate custodial sentence

This represents an increase of 19 percentage points for offences involving an adult and 6 percentage points for offences involving a juvenile since 2008.

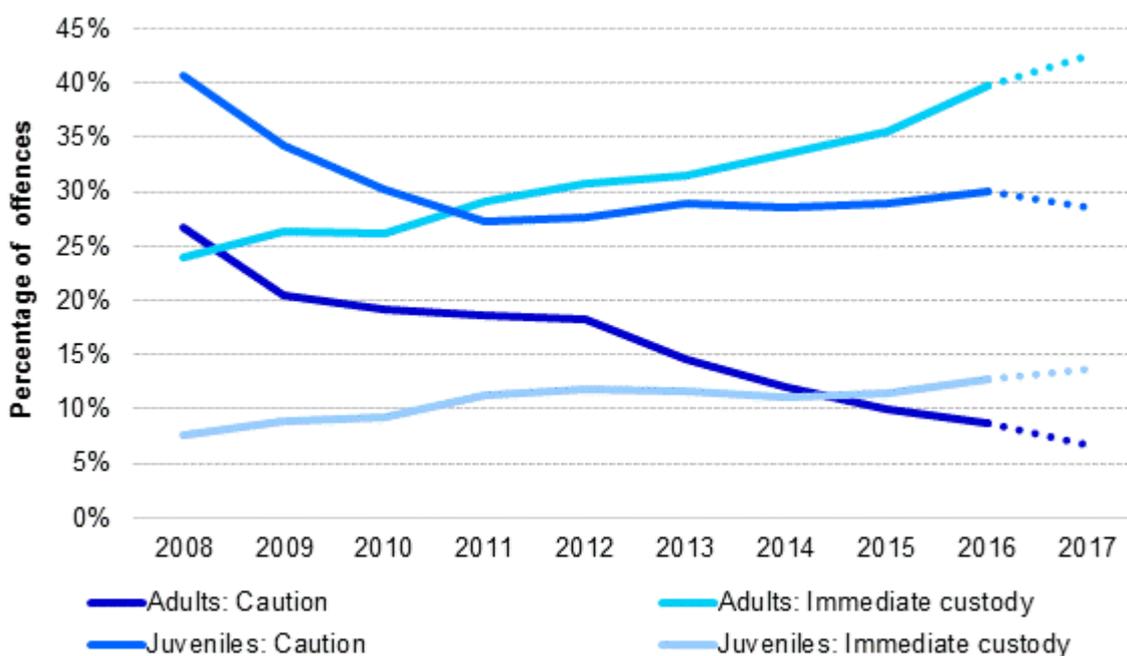
7% of offences involving an adult and 29% of offences involving a juvenile received a caution

These figures have fallen by 20 percentage points for offences involving an adult and 12 percentage points for offences involving a juvenile since 2008.

The average custodial sentence length was 7.5 months

This has risen by 2.2 months since 2008, with 38% sentenced to more than 6 months compared to 20% in 2008.

Figure 3: Proportion of knife and offensive weapon offences given a caution or immediate custodial sentence by age group in England and Wales, 2008 to 2017 (Source: Table 2)



The dotted lines in the chart indicate where figures have been estimated

The most common disposal for a knife and offensive weapon offence received by adults continues to be immediate custody (43%) followed by suspended sentence (25%) and community sentence (16%). For juveniles, the most common disposals were community sentence (52%), caution (29%) and immediate custody (14%).

For those adults receiving immediate custody the average sentence length in 2017 was 7.6 months, and it was 7.0 months for juveniles.

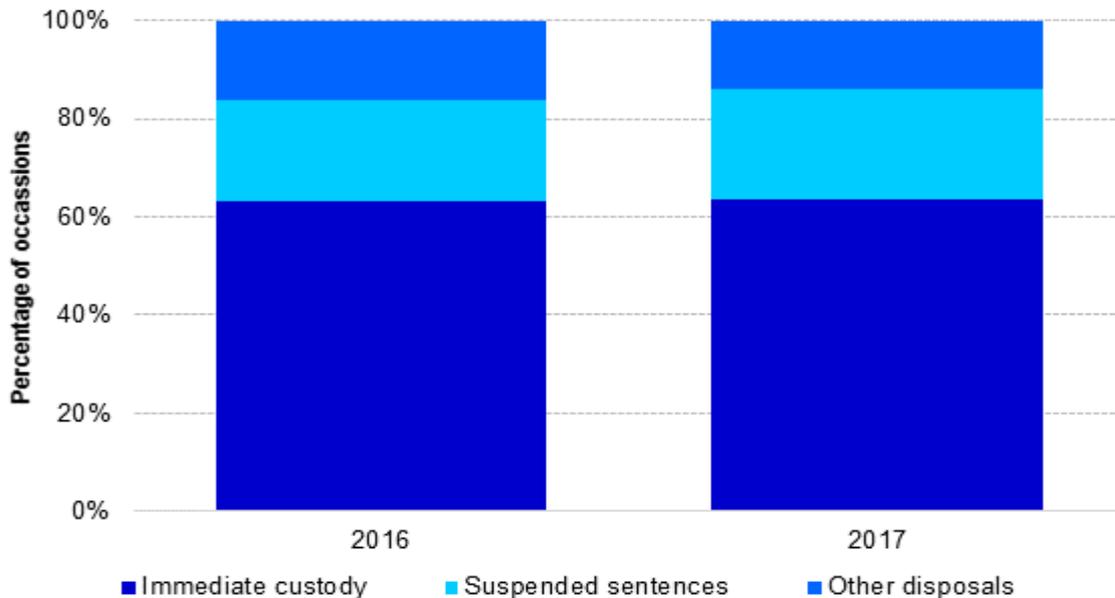
Of all sentencing occasions in 2017 involving a knife or offensive weapon offence, 72% had no previous possession offences involving a blade, point or offensive weapon. This has fallen 8 percentage points since 2008 (80%).

3. Sentencing for repeat offences involving possession of a knife or offensive weapon

86% of adult repeat offenders received some form of custodial sentence

This figure has increased by 2 percentage points when compared to 2016 for offenders convicted under section 28 of the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015².

Figure 4: Repeat knife possession sentencing or cautioning occasions involving an adult offender, by disposal type, 2016 and 2017 (Source: Table 5)



9,481 sentencing or cautioning occasions have been identified for repeat offences under this act since it was introduced in July 2015. There has been an increase in the number of cases from 3,898 in 2016 to an estimated 4,624 in 2017.

Of the 4,624 occasions, 4,252 involved an adult offender, 64% of which resulted in an immediate custodial sentence which has remained the same as in 2016. An additional 22% received a suspended sentence order, which has also remained stable since 2016.

For those adults receiving immediate custody the average sentence length in 2017 was 7.6 months, and was 6.5 months for 16 and 17 year olds.

The remaining 372 occasions involved offenders who were aged 16 or 17; 48% resulted in an immediate custodial sentence and 46% resulted in a community sentence. The proportion receiving a community sentence has gone up by 3 percentage points since 2016, and down by 3 percentage points over the same period for immediate custody.

The proportion of 16 to 17 year olds receiving a community sentence is higher than that of adults because this form of non-custodial sentence may be given where the young offender pleads guilty³. Of these community sentences, 79% were youth rehabilitation orders⁴.

² www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/2/part/1/crossheading/repeat-offences-involving-offensive-weapons-etc

Further information

The data presented in this publication are provisional. Figures provided for more recent quarters are subject to change in future publications as ongoing cases pass through the Criminal Justice System.

A technical guide providing further information on how the data is collected and processed, as well as information on the revisions policy and legislation relevant to knife and offensive weapon sentencing can be found at

www.gov.uk/government/collections/knife-and-offensive-weapon-sentencing-statistics

As announced in the December 2017 bulletin, this and future publications will include additional information around plea; other offences dealt with at the same time as a possession of a knife or offensive weapon offence; information on the number of offenders; number of offences committed in the period; and the number of times an individual is formerly dealt with at court or cautioned i.e. sentencing occasions. The publication has also been renamed 'Knife or Offensive Weapon Sentencing Statistics', to better reflect the coverage of the offences included.

Accompanying files

As well as this bulletin, the following products are published as part of this release:

- Excel tables containing data on knife or offensive weapon offences up to 2017
- An interactive table tool to look at previous offences involving possession of a blade, point or offensive weapon. The tool provides further breakdowns by gender and police identified ethnicity.
- A Sankey diagram looking at outcomes of those offenders sentenced for knife or offensive weapon offences. The diagram provides further breakdowns by gender and offence type.

Official Statistics status

Official statistics are produced under the remit of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. They are produced impartially and are free from political influence. More information can be found on the UK Statistics Authority website, accessible via the link below.

www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/monitoring-and-assessment/code-of-practice/

Contact

Press enquiries should be directed to the Ministry of Justice press office:

Tel: 020 3334 3536

³ 90% of 16 to 17 year olds pleaded guilty in this period, and young offenders cannot receive a custodial sentence of less than four months in the Youth Court

⁴ For a detailed list of the types of juvenile orders this consists of, please see the technical guide at www.gov.uk/government/collections/knife-and-offensive-weapon-sentencing-statistics

Email: newsdesk@justice.gsi.gov.uk

Other enquiries about these statistics should be directed to the Justice Statistics Analytical Services division of the Ministry of Justice:

Craig Medhurst, Ministry of Justice, 7th Floor, 102 Petty France, London, SW1H 9AJ

Email: statistics.enquiries@justice.gsi.gov.uk

Next update: 14 June 2018

www.gov.uk/government/collections/knife-and-offensive-weapon-sentencing-statistics

© Crown copyright

Produced by the Ministry of Justice

Alternative formats are available on request from statistics.enquiries@justice.gsi.gov.uk