



Knife and Offensive Weapon Sentencing Statistics, England and Wales – Year ending March 2018

Main points

The highest number of knife and offensive weapon offences since 2012 were formally dealt with by the Criminal Justice System (CJS)



In the year ending March 2018 21,045 knife and offensive weapon offences were formally dealt with by the CJS. This is the highest number of offences dealt with since the year ending March 2012 (20,161).

Offenders are more likely to receive a custodial sentence for a knife and offensive weapon offence and are less likely to receive a caution.



37% of knife and offensive weapon offences resulted in an immediate custodial sentence and just 12% a caution, compared with 22% and 27% (respectively) in the year ending March 2009.

This was the first knife and offensive weapons possession offence for most offenders cautioned or convicted during the year ending March 2018



For just under three quarters (72%) of offenders cautioned or convicted for a knife and offensive weapons possession offence in the year ending March 2018, it was their first knife and offensive weapons possession offence.

83% of offenders sentenced under section 28 of the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015 received some form of custodial sentence in the year ending March 2018.



This has increased from 67% of offenders with at least one previous knife and offensive weapons possession offence in the year ending March 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 weapons. It should be noted that figures for the latest quarter (January to March 2018) are provisional.

Alongside this publication, we will be publishing a new analytical paper 'Examining the Educational Background of Young Knife Possession Offenders'. These experimental

statistics look at educational background of those offenders dealt with for knife possession offences during their childhood, who reached the end of Key Stage 4 in 2012/13. This report has been produced using data from the 2015 data share between the Ministry of Justice and Department for Education.

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

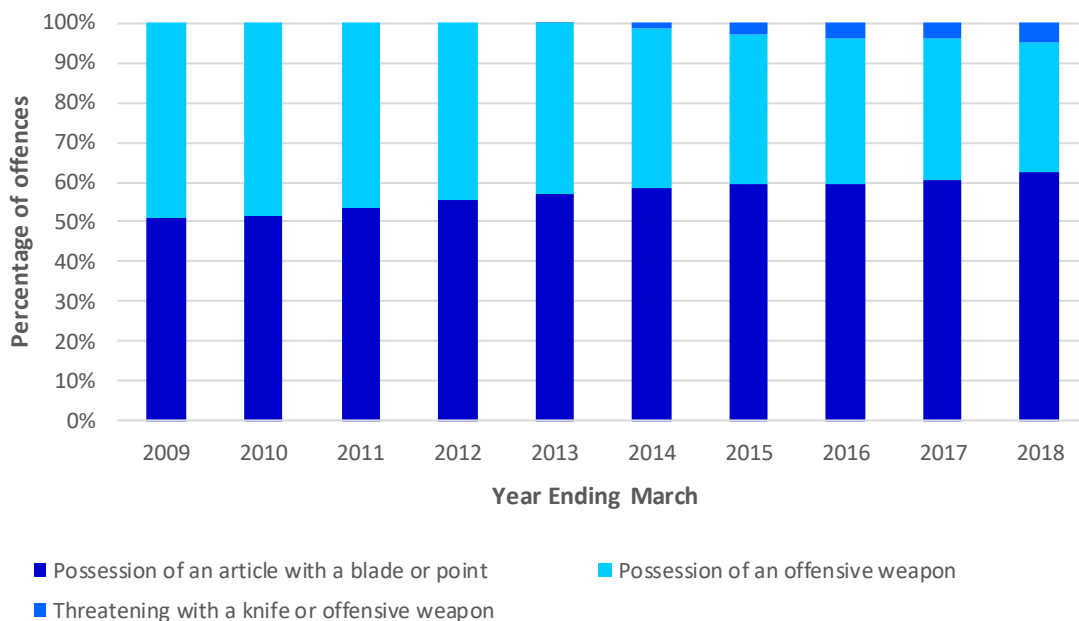
1. Knife and offensive weapon offences overview

The highest number of knife and offensive weapon offences since 2012 were formally dealt with by the Criminal Justice System (CJS).

21,045 knife and offensive weapon offences were formally dealt with by the CJS in the year ending March 2018. This is the highest number of offences dealt with since the year ending March 2012 (20,161).

Recent police recorded crime figures published by the ONS¹ also showed an increase in the number of knife and offensive weapon offences recorded. In the year ending March 2012 18,900 offences were recorded compared with 30,280 recorded in 2017.

Figure 1: Knife and offensive weapon offences by offence type, England and Wales, annually from year ending March 2009 (Source: Table 1a)



Just under two thirds (62%) of all knife and offensive weapon offences are now possession of blade or point offences, compared with just half (51%) in the year ending March 2009.

Offences involving the possession of an article with a blade or point dealt with by the CJS in the year ending March 2018 are at the highest they have been since 2010 (13,144), with a 9% increase over the last year. Similarly, the number of threatening with a knife or offensive weapon offences increased by 26% over the same period. However, the number of possession of offensive weapon offences fell by 2%, halving over the last 10 years; falling from 13,780 in the year ending March 2009 to 6,867 in the year ending March 2018.

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www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/crimeinenglandandwales/yearendingdecember2017

2. Sentencing and Offending History

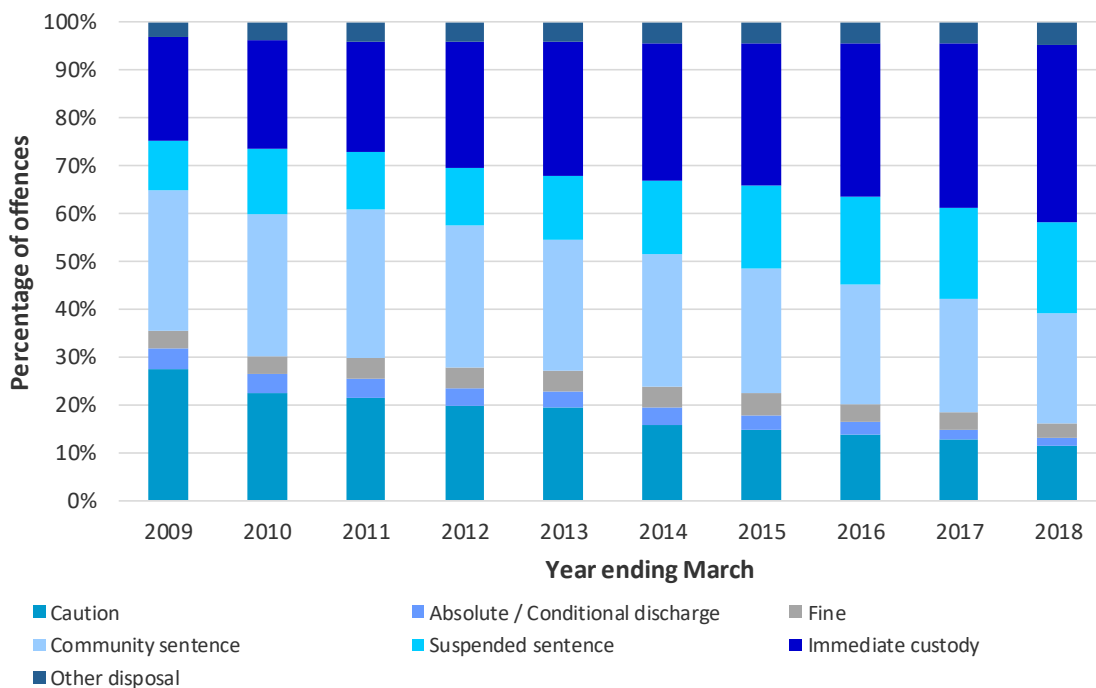
Offenders are more likely to receive a custodial sentence for a knife and offensive weapon offence and are less likely to receive a caution.

37% of knife and offensive weapon offences resulted in an immediate custodial sentence and just 12% a caution, compared with 22% and 27% (respectively) in the year ending March 2009.

This was the first knife and offensive weapons offence for most offenders cautioned or convicted during the year ending March 2018

For just under three quarters (72%) of offenders cautioned or convicted for a knife and offensive weapons offence in the year ending March 2018 this was their first knife and offensive weapons possession offence.

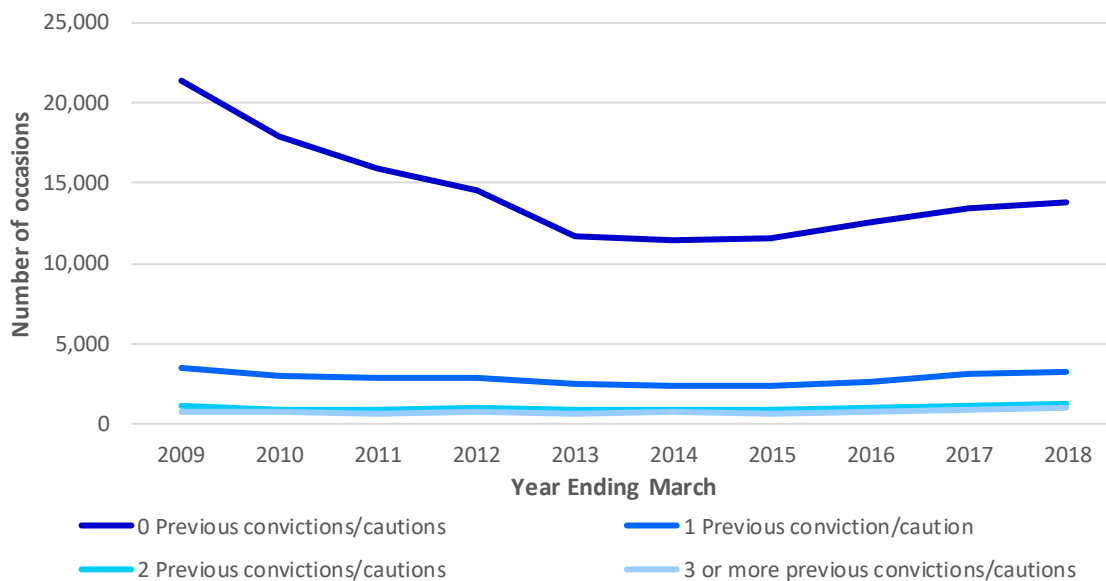
Figure 2: Knife and offensive weapon offences by disposal type, England and Wales, annually from year ending March 2009 (Source: Table 1)



Custodial sentences are now at the highest level they have been. In the year ending March 2018 over a third (37% or 7,774 offences) of all knife and offensive weapon offences resulted in immediate custody compared with just 6,109 offences or 22% in the year ending March 2009.

However, the proportion of offences resulting in a caution is at the lowest level it has ever been – 27% of offences resulted in a caution during the year ending March 2009, falling to just 12% in the year ending March 2018.

Figure 3: Number of previous cautions or convictions for the possession of a knife or offensive weapon offence for offenders cautioned or convicted for a knife or offensive weapon offence, England and Wales, annually from year ending March 2009 (Source: Pivot Table P1)



There has been an increase in offenders dealt with for their first, knife and offensive weapons offence, in each of the last 5 years – increasing from 11,427 occasions in the year ending March 2014 to 13,810 occasions in the year ending March 2018. This follows large decreases in similar offenders dealt with between 2009 and 2013. Over the same period an increase has been seen in the number of occasions involving offenders with one previous knife and offensive weapons possession offence, increasing from 2,376 in the year ending March 2014 to 3,249 in the year ending March 2018.

A first-time knife and offensive weapons offender was more likely to receive a community sentence (29%) in the year ending March 2018 where as in the year ending March 2009 they were more likely to receive a caution (36%). The proportion receiving a suspended sentence has also increased over this period from 9% to 20%, with a similar increase seen for the proportion receiving immediate custody (15% to 23%).

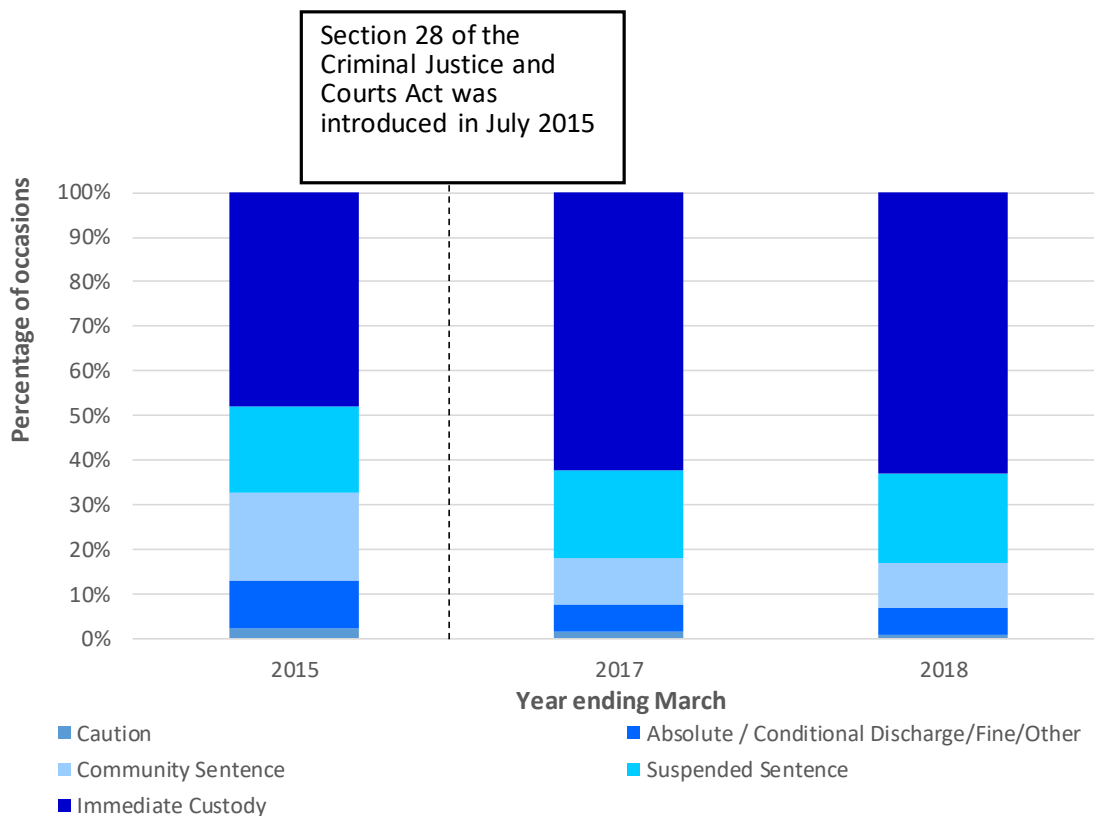
Immediate custody continued to be the sentence most often received by offenders with one or more previous knife and offensive weapons possession offences, with 61% receiving this sentence in the year ending March 2018 compared with just 42% in the year ending March 2009. In contrast, cautions are now less likely to be received by these offenders, with just 1% receiving this sentence type in the year ending March 2018.

3. Sentencing under section 28 of the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015²

83% of offenders sentenced under section 28 of the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015 received some form of custodial sentence in the year ending March 2018.

This has increased from 67% of offenders with at least one previous knife and offensive weapons possession offence in the year ending March 2015.

Figure 4: Knife and offensive weapons possession sentencing and cautioning occasions, by disposal type, year ending March 2015, 2017 and 2018 for repeat offenders (Source: Pivot Table P2 and Table 7)



Notes:

1. Figures for 2015 have been taken from Pivot Table P2.
2. Figures for 2017 and 2018 have been taken from Table 7

Following the commencement of section 28 of the CJCA 2015, a court must impose a minimum sentence on an offender who has been convicted of a second or subsequent offence involving possession of a knife or offensive weapon. The court must impose the minimum sentence unless it would not be in the interest of justice to do so

Prior to the introduction of this legislation around half (48%) of knife and offensive weapons possession offenders with at least one previous knife and offensive weapons offence

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

received an immediate custodial sentence. In the year ending March 2018 around two thirds (63%) sentenced under section 28 of the CJCA 2015 received an immediate custodial sentence.

Since the introduction of the legislation there has also been an increase in the average custodial sentence lengths, from 7.1 months in the year ending March 2017 to 7.8 months in the year ending March 2018.

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

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/knife-possession-sentencing-quarterly>

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 the year ending March 2018
- 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.
- An analytical paper presenting experimental statistics on educational background of those offenders dealt with for knife possession offences during their childhood, who reached the end of Key Stage 4 in 2012/13.

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/

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<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/knife-possession-sentencing-quarterly>

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