



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

Main points

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- The highest number of knife and offensive weapon offences since 2010 were formally dealt with by the Criminal Justice System (CJS)**  In the year ending September 2018 21,381 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 September 2010 (21,851).
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- Offenders are more likely to receive an immediate custodial sentence for a knife and offensive weapon offence.**  36% of knife and offensive weapon offences resulted in an immediate custodial sentence and just 11% a caution, compared with 23% and 24% (respectively) in the year ending September 2009.
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- For around three quarters (72%) of offenders this was the first knife or offensive weapon offence**  The proportion of first time offenders for this offence type has been decreasing since the year ending September 2009 (from 80%) and is now at its lowest level.
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- 82% of offenders sentenced under section 28 of the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015 received some form of custodial sentence in the year ending September 2018.**  This has increased from 65% of offenders with at least one previous knife and offensive weapons possession offence in the year ending September 2014.
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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.

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

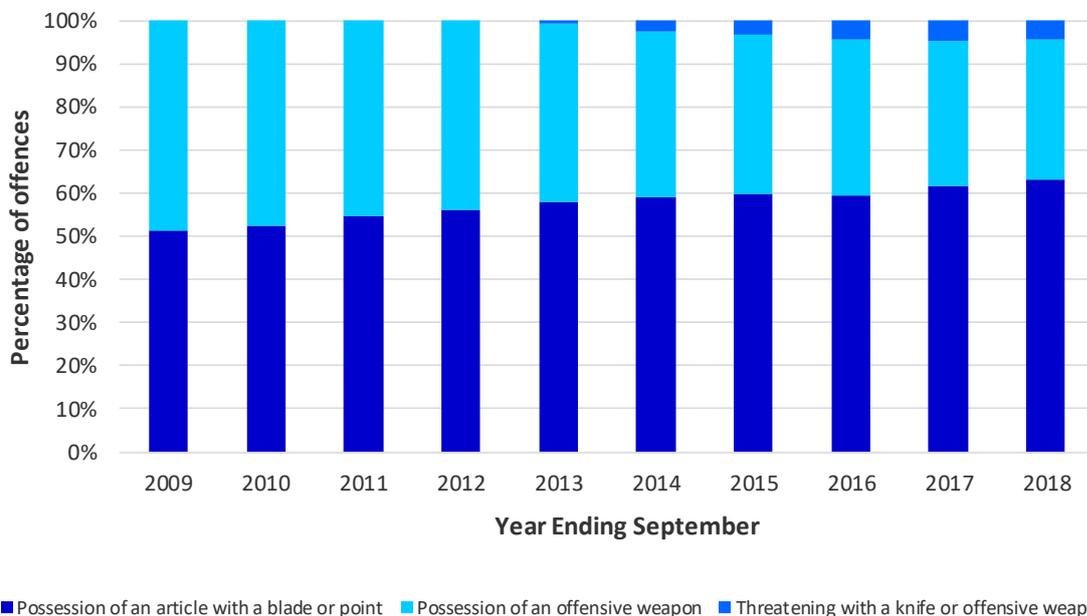
1. Knife and offensive weapon offences overview

The highest number of knife and offensive weapon offences since 2010 were formally dealt with by the Criminal Justice System (CJS).

21,381 knife and offensive weapon offences were formally dealt with by the CJS in the year ending September 2018. This is the highest number of offences dealt with since the year ending September 2010 (21,851).

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 32,986 recorded in the year ending June 2018. Furthermore, information published by the Home Office on “Crime outcomes in England and Wales” show that around 55% of these offences resulted in a charge or police caution in the year ending March 2018.²

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



Just under two thirds (63%) of all knife and offensive weapon offences are now possession of blade or point offences, compared with just half (51%) in the year ending September 2009.

The proportion of offences involving the possession of an article with a blade or point or the possession of an offensive weapon committed by an adult has remained at around 80% since 2009. However, since the year ending June 2013 there has been a 13 percentage point increase in the proportion of offenders convicted or cautioned for a threatening with a knife or offensive weapon offence who were adults; increasing from 70% in the year ending September 2013 to 83% in 2018.

¹

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/crimeinenglandandwales/yearendingjune2018>

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/crime-outcomes-in-england-and-wales-2017-to-2018>

2. Sentencing and Offending History

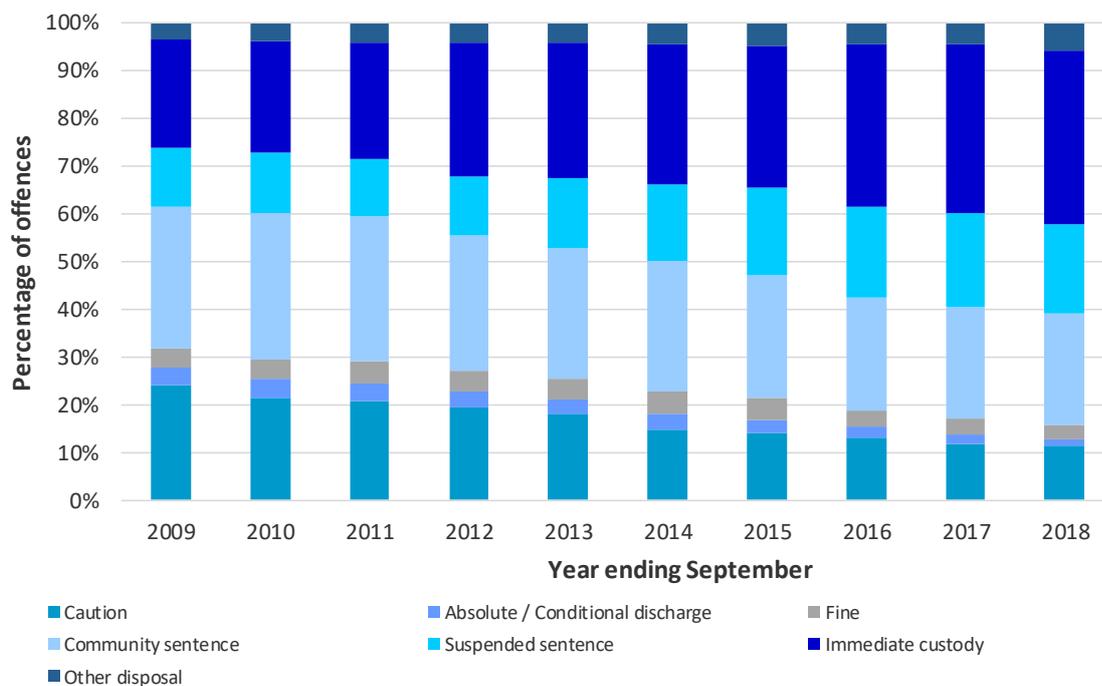
Offenders are more likely to receive an immediate custodial sentence for a knife and offensive weapon offence.

36% of knife and offensive weapon offences resulted in an immediate custodial sentence and just 11% a caution, compared with 23% and 24% (respectively) in the year ending September 2009.

For around three quarters (72%) of offenders this was the first knife or offensive weapon offence

The proportion of first time offenders for this offence type has been decreasing since the year ending September 2009 (from 80%) and is now at its lowest level.

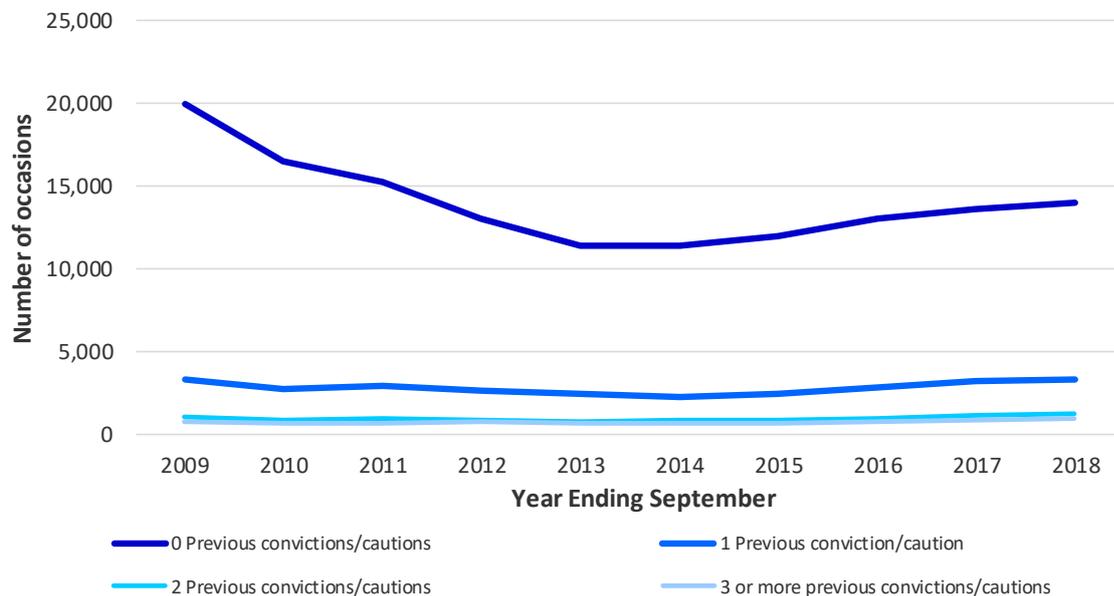
Figure 2: Knife and offensive weapon offences by disposal type, England and Wales, annually from year ending September 2009 (Source: Table 1)



Custodial sentences are now at the highest level they have been. In the year ending September 2018 over a third (36% or 7,789 offences) of all knife and offensive weapon offences resulted in immediate custody compared with just 5,938 offences or 23% in the year ending September 2009.

However, the proportion of offences resulting in a caution is at the lowest level it has ever been – 24% (6,354) of offences resulted in a caution during the year ending September 2009, falling to just 11% (2,452) in the year ending September 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 September 2009 (Source: Interactive Pivot Table Tool)



Whilst the proportion of first time offenders for this offence type has fallen, there has been an increase in the number of offenders dealt with for their first knife and offensive weapons offence in each of the last 6 years – increasing from 11,376 occasions in the year ending September 2013 to 13,991 occasions in the year ending September 2018. This follows 35% decrease in similar offenders dealt with between 2009 and 2012 (from 19,966 occasions to 13,030).

Since 2014 both the number and proportion of offenders dealt with who had one or more previous knife and offensive weapons offences increased year on year, rising from 25% or 3,769 occasions in the year ending September 2014 to 28% or 5,449 occasions in 2018.

A first-time knife and offensive weapons offender was more likely to receive a community sentence (30%) in the year ending September 2018 where as in the year ending September 2009 they were more likely to receive a caution (32%). The proportion receiving a suspended sentence has also increased over this period from 10% to 20%, with a similar increase seen for the proportion receiving immediate custody (16% to 23%).

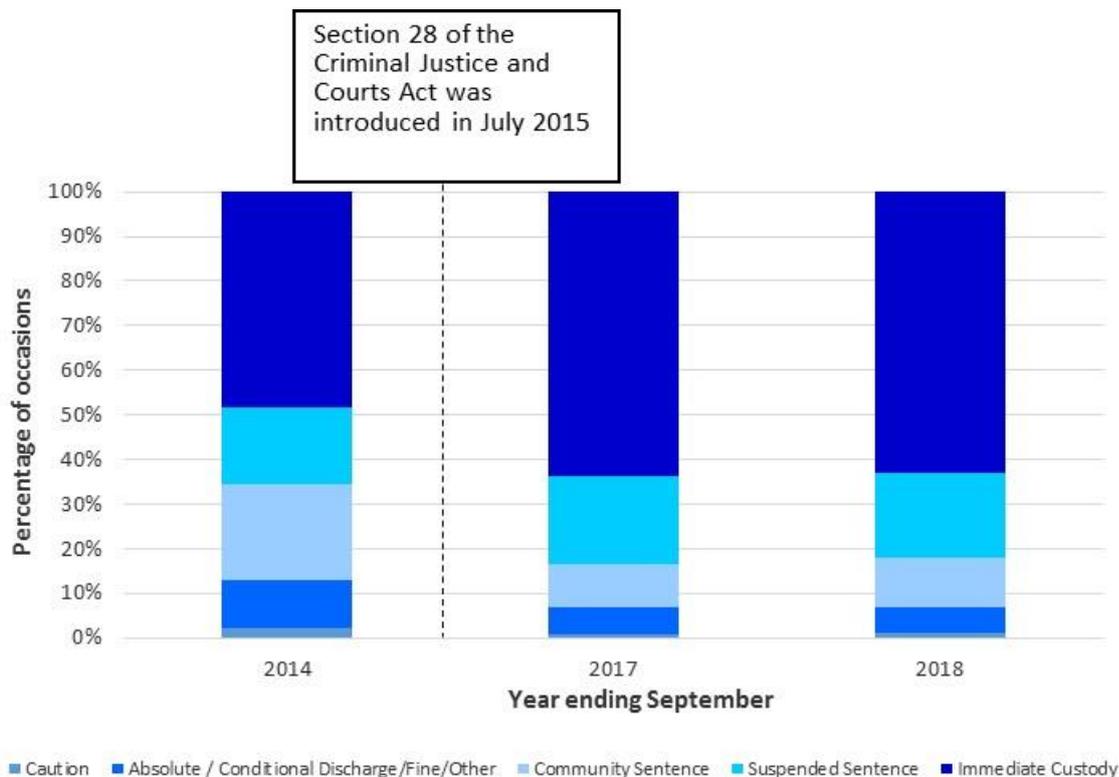
Immediate custody continued to be the sentence most often received by offenders with one or more previous knife and offensive weapons possession offences, with 59% receiving this sentence in the year ending September 2018 compared with just 42% in the year ending September 2009. In contrast, cautions are now less likely to be received by these offenders, with just 1% receiving this sentence type in the year ending September 2018.

3. Sentencing under section 28 of the Criminal Justice and Courts Act (CJCA) 2015³

82% of offenders sentenced under section 28 of the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015 received some form of custodial sentence in the year ending September 2018.

This has increased from 65% of offenders with at least one previous knife and offensive weapons possession offence in the year ending September 2014.

Figure 4: Knife and offensive weapons possession sentencing and cautioning occasions, by disposal type, year ending September 2014, 2017 and 2018 for repeat offenders (Source: Interactive Pivot Table Tool and Table 7)



Notes:

1. Figures for 2014 have been taken from the Interactive Pivot Table Tool.
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.

³ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/2/part/1/crossheading/repeat-offences-involving-offensive-weapons-etc>

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 received an immediate custodial sentence. In the year ending September 2018 around two thirds (63%) sentenced under section 28 of the CJA 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 7.2 months in the year ending September 2017 to 7.9 months in the year ending September 2018. Over this period an increase was seen in the average custodial sentence lengths for both juveniles and adults; increasing from 6.4 months to 7.9 months for juveniles, and 7.3 months to 7.9 months for adults.

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 September 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, police identified ethnicity and prosecuting police force area.
- 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.

<https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/monitoring-and-assessment/code-of-practice/>

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Next update: 14 March 2018

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

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