



Ministry
of Justice

Knife Possession Sentencing Quarterly Brief July to September 2013 England and Wales

Ministry of Justice
Statistics Bulletin

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Introduction

This bulletin presents key statistics describing the trends in cautioning and sentencing, probation supervision and the prison population for possession of a knife or offensive weapon in England and Wales. This bulletin does not cover all knife crimes (offences involving a knife) as published by the Office for National Statistics¹. Details of other official statistics publications regarding knife related statistics can be found on page 27 of this bulletin.

The information presented combines both offences of possession of an article with a blade or point and offences of possession of an offensive weapon. The detailed offence codes used in this bulletin are outlined in the glossary section.

Also included in this bulletin are statistics on the recently introduced offences of aggravated possession of a knife or offensive weapon. These are included in their own separate table and are not included in other totals to enable consistent comparisons over time.

Recent Developments

- **New offence of aggravated knife possession (Table 8, page 18)**

From 3 December 2012, new offences of aggravated knife possession came into force as part of the provisions introduced in the Legal Aid Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders (LASPO) Act 2012. Initial disposals given for offenders dealt with against these new offences were included for the first time in the January to March 2013 Quarterly Bulletin

- **Methodological change introduced in Q4 2012**

From the fourth quarter of 2012 the figures presented in this bulletin were based on new estimates of the number and breakdown of disposals given for the possession of a knife or an offensive weapon. The estimates were introduced following a detailed analysis that tracked changes in the disposal figures from those initially published for each quarter to those released over the following year as data held on the PNC was updated with new information.

The background to and methodology used to derive these estimates was published in the October to December 2012 release of this bulletin – [click here for link](#) – and we will continue to monitor the methodology use to estimate the final disposal outcomes in future editions to this bulletin to ensure that the estimated figures are realistic.

¹ www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/crime-stats/crime-statistics/period-ending-june-2013/stb-crime-in-england-and-wales--year-ending-june-2013.html#tab-Offences-involving-knives-and-sharp-instruments

This statistical brief, along with the full tables (including both current and estimated figures) are available from the Ministry of Justice Website at:

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

The key events that might be expected to affect the statistics were:

- On 21 May 2008, the Court of Appeal issued the judgment in *Povey*² that said, because of prevalence, magistrates should normally sentence those convicted of knife crime possession offences at the top end of the range.
- The Sentencing Guidelines Council issued an update to the magistrates' courts guidelines, with effect from 4 August 2008, which set out the effect of the Court of Appeal judgment and made it clear that the starting point for the lowest level of knife possession amongst adults should be 12 weeks' custody.
- This applies in cases where a first time offender pleads not guilty to possession of a knife in non-dangerous circumstances. A guilty plea would attract a discount in the normal way, as would any personal mitigation, and could take the sentence below the custody threshold.
- Since September 2008 all probation areas have been able to provide intensive delivery of 300 hour Community Payback sentences for unemployed offenders convicted of knife crime offences, who are on the brink of custody. In January 2009 this offer of intensive delivery of a minimum of 18 hours per week over three days was extended to Community Payback sentences of any length imposed for an offence of knife crime, when an offender is unemployed.
- From 3 December 2012, a new offence of aggravated knife possession came into force. Anyone aged 16 or over who uses a knife or offensive weapon to threaten and endanger others will face a mandatory custodial sentence, unless the court considers there to be particular circumstances which would make it unjust to do so.³

This publication has been prepared by Justice Statistics Analytical Services. If you have any feedback, questions or request for further information about these statistics, please direct them to the appropriate contact given at the end of this report.

² Povey & Ors, R. v, Court of Appeal - Criminal Division, May 21, 2008, [2008] EWCA Crim 1261.

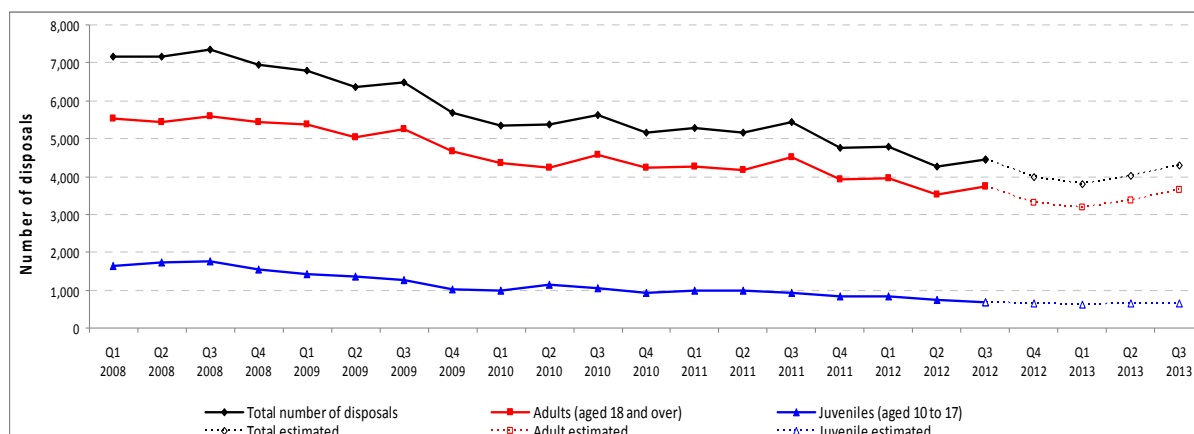
³ For legislation, see: www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2012/10/contents/enacted

Key findings

Estimates indicate that the final disposal figures for Q3 2013 will show:

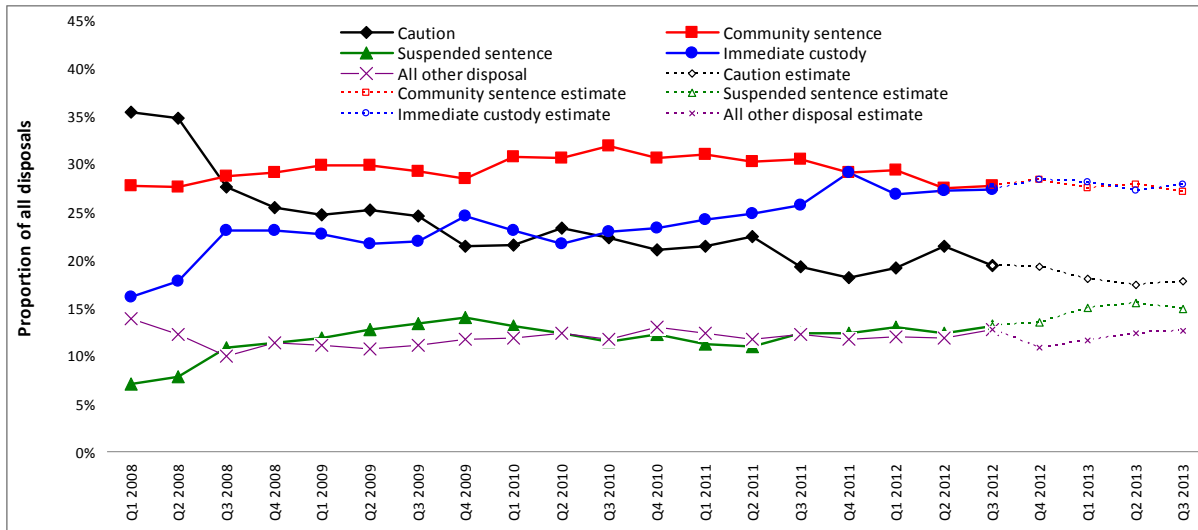
- 4,305 disposals given for possession of a knife or an offensive weapon, 3% lower than in Q3 2012, but an increase of 7% on the previous quarter. A similar pattern can be seen in each of the last six years where Q3 figures are higher than Q2 suggesting a seasonal trend. The number of disposals for possession offences is now 41% lower than the peak in Q3 2008 (7,276).
- Over 5 times as many adults offenders (3,651) were cautioned or convicted for possession offences compared to 654 juveniles offenders – a ratio that has generally been increasing over the last 4 years as the number of juveniles cautioned or convicted has fallen at a faster rate than for adults. Table 2 shows the split between adult and juvenile offenders. Since Q3 2012, the number of disposals given to juveniles for possession offences fell by 6% while, for adults, the number of disposals fell by 2%.

Figure 1: Number of disposals given for knife and offensive weapon possession by age, in England and Wales, between Q1 2008 and Q3 2013



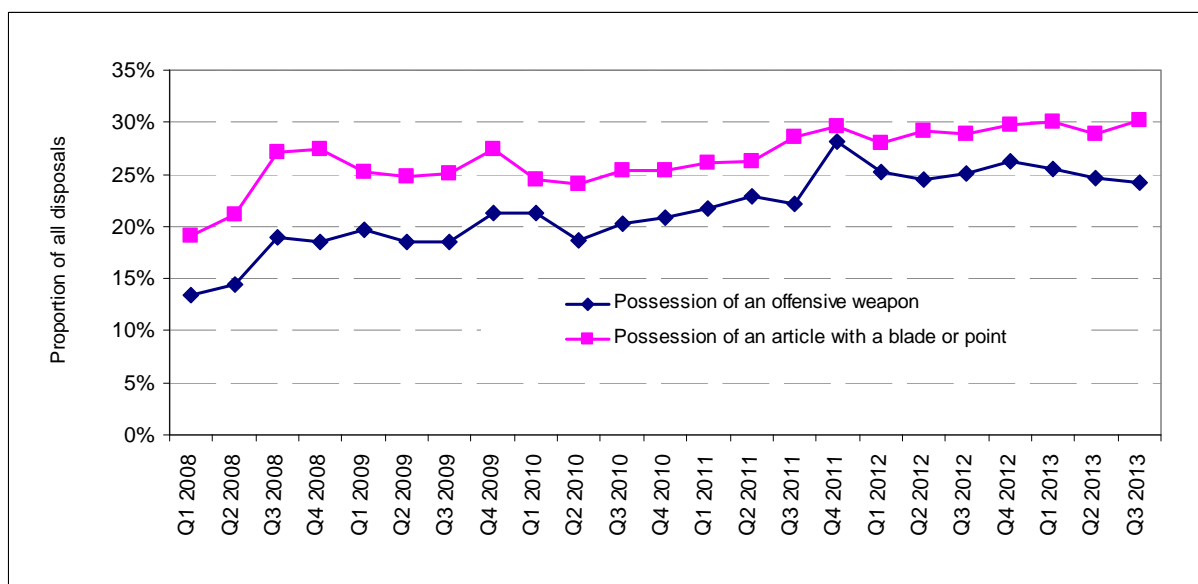
- The most common disposals for possession of a knife or an offensive weapon were an immediate custodial sentence (28%) and a community sentence (27%).
- The proportion of possession offences resulting in community sentences and immediate custody sentences has remained fairly steady over the last year with neither changing by more than 1 percentage point in the last five quarters. Similarly there has been little change in the proportion of fines and discharges given. However, there was a one percentage point fall in the proportion of cautions given from Q3 2012, to 18% in Q3 2013 and the proportion of offences resulting in suspended sentences increased by 2 percentage points to 15%. Note, figures for the latest quarter are estimated so may change slightly once final outcomes are known.
- Over the longer term, the proportion of possession offences resulting in an immediate custody has increased since 2008 - particularly during 2008 when changes were made to the sentencing guidelines for knife possession as outlined

Figure 2: Proportion of type of disposal given for knife and offensive weapon possession in England and Wales, between Q1 2008 and Q3 2013



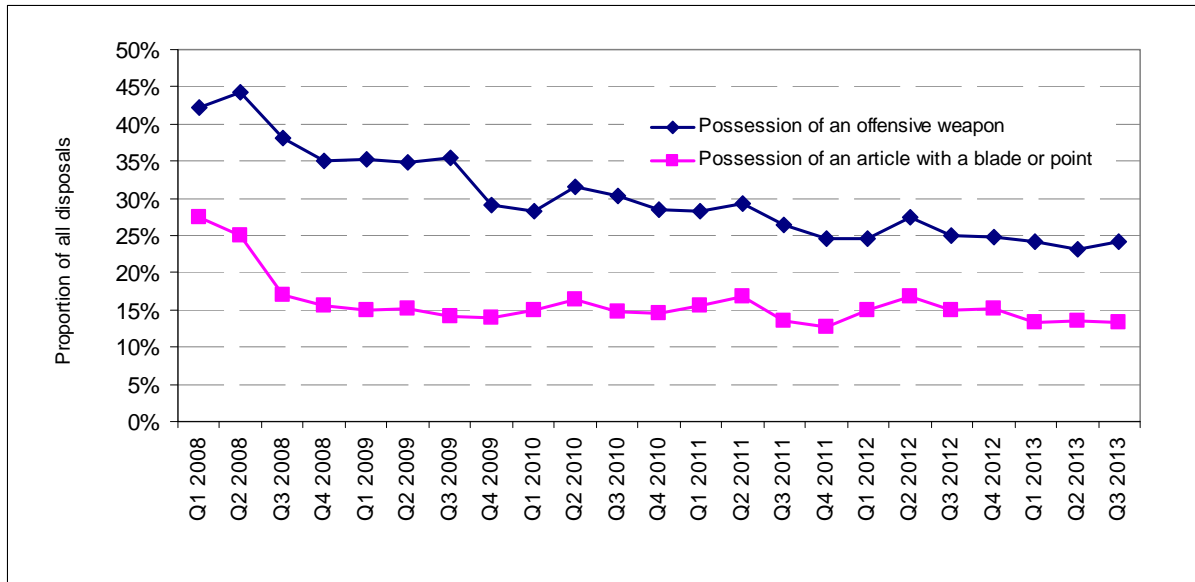
- In the latest quarter, a greater proportion of offences 59% (2,560) involved the possession of an article with a blade or point, this compared to 41% (1,745) of offences involving possession of an offensive weapon – see Table 3. Over the last four quarters the proportion of offences involving possession of an article with a blade has increased by 2 percentage points. Figures 3 shows that offenders convicted of offences involving the possession of an article with a blade or point are more likely to be given an immediate custodial sentence than offenders convicted of offences involving an offensive weapon, 30% compared to 24%.

Figure 3: Proportion of offences resulting in custodial sentences given for knife and offensive weapon possession in England and Wales, between Q1 2008 and Q3 2013



- Figure 4 shows that the proportion of cautions given to offenders is almost twice as high for possession of an offensive weapon (24%) than for the possession of a blade or point (13%) in the latest quarter.

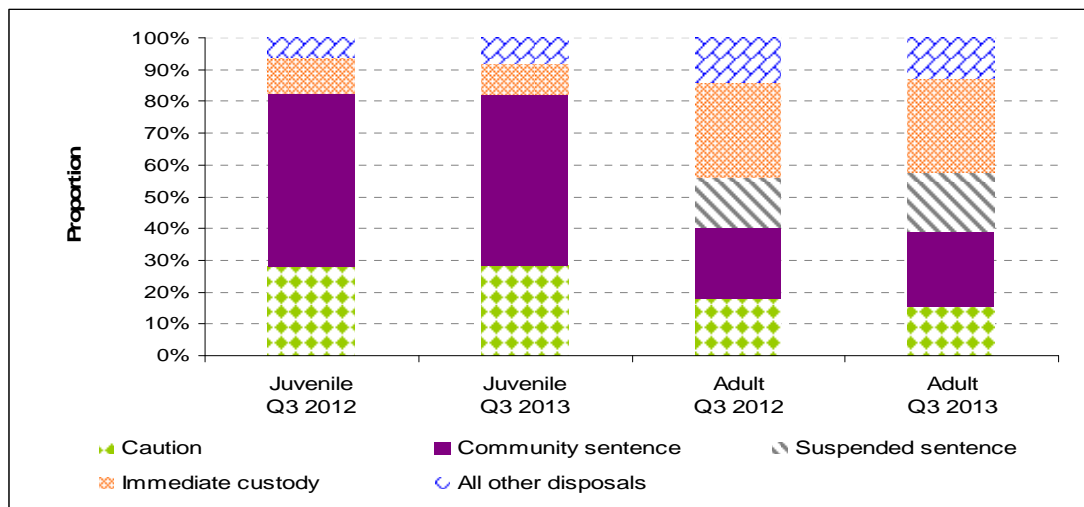
Figure 4: Proportion of offences resulting in cautions for knife and offensive weapon possession in England and Wales, between Q1 2008 and Q3 2013



- Over half of all juveniles (53%) receiving disposals for possession offences were given a community sentence, while nearly a third (29%) were given a youth caution. Immediate custodial sentences decreased slightly in the last year – 11% to 10%, but down 3 percentage points since Q3 2011 but up 2 percentage points from the same period 5 years ago. The proportion of juveniles given a youth caution⁴ has increased by 1 percentage points over the last year and is now 4 percentage points higher than in Q3 2011.
- Amongst adult offenders, nearly a third were given an immediate custodial sentence (31%), up one percentage point on a year ago. Proportions of cautions have fallen in the last year - with 16% of adults given a caution in Q3 2013 compared to 18% in Q3 2012.

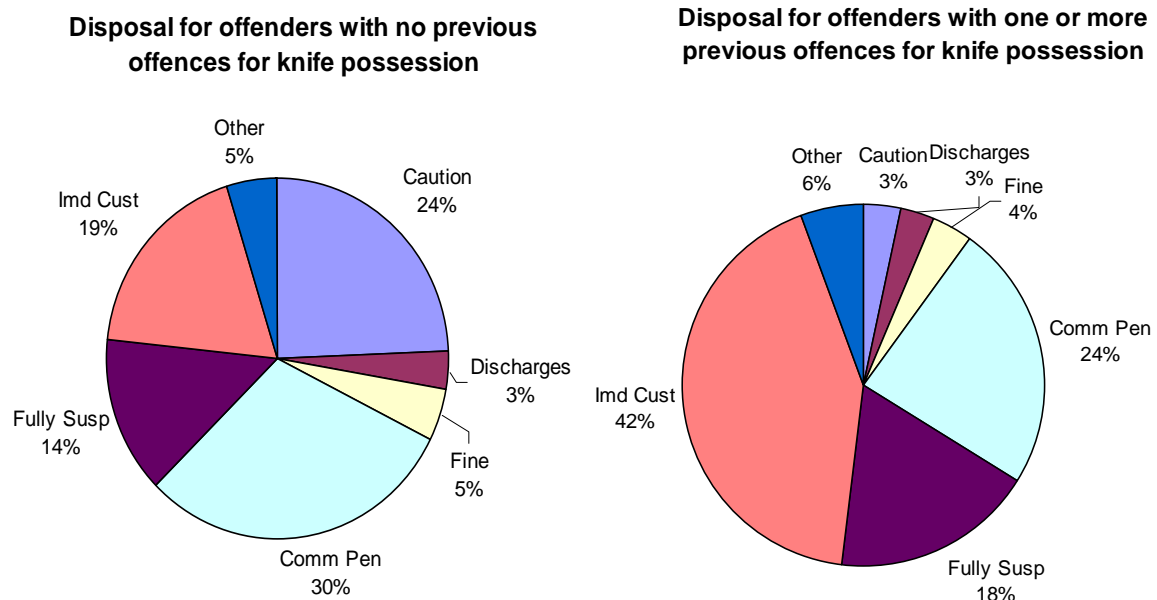
⁴ Since April 8th 2013 youth cautions were introduced replacing reprimands and warnings for young offenders.

Figure 5 Proportion of type of disposal given for knife and offensive weapon possession for juveniles and adults, in England and Wales, Q3 2012 and Q3 2013



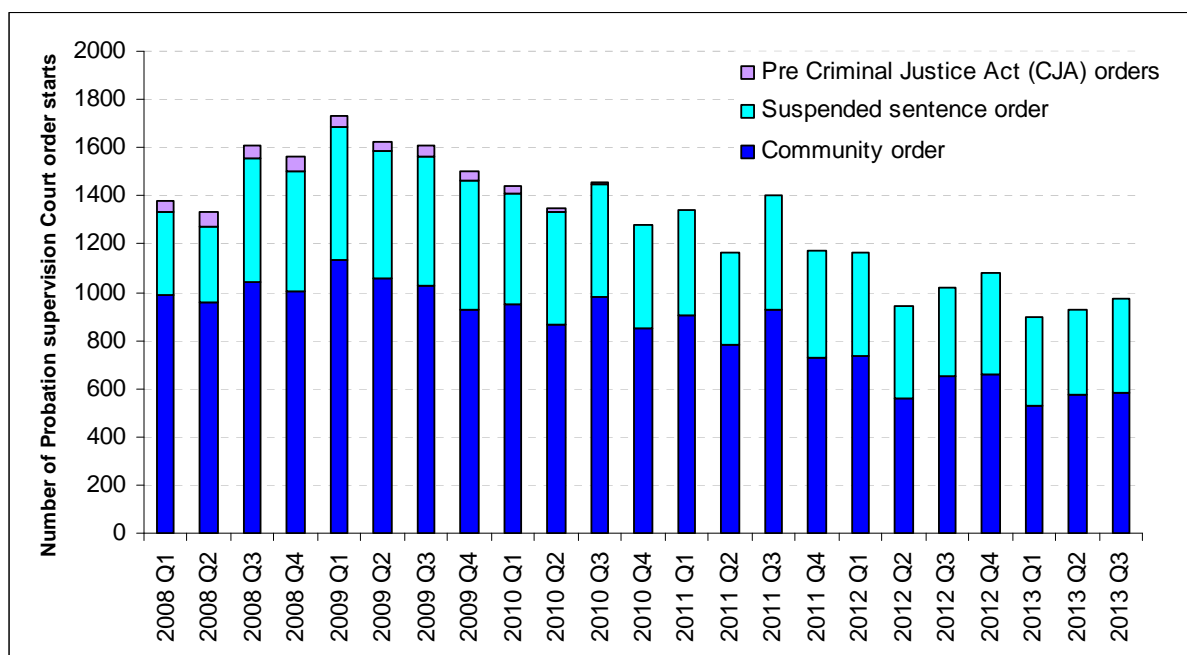
- The types of disposal given for knife possession offences are correlated with the number of previous cautions or convictions for possession offences. For offenders with no previous knife possession offences, 24% received a caution in the 12 months ending September 2013 whereas 30% received a community sentence and 19% were given immediate custody. However, for offenders with at least one previous possession offence on their record, 42% were sentenced to immediate custody in the 12 months ending September 2013, while only 3% received a caution. (Figure 6)
- Juvenile offenders having more than one previous knife possession offence on their record are most likely to receive a community sentence (59%) or immediate custody (26%). Only 3% of those juvenile offenders with one or more previous youth caution⁴.
- The custody rate of adult offenders rises in relation with their number of previous possession offences, with 55% of those offenders with 3 or more previous offences receiving an immediate custody sentence compared to 22% for those with no previous possession offence.

Figure 6: Number of previous convictions or cautions for the possession of a knife or offensive weapon for offenders convicted or cautioned for the possession offences, in England and Wales in the 12 months ending September 2013



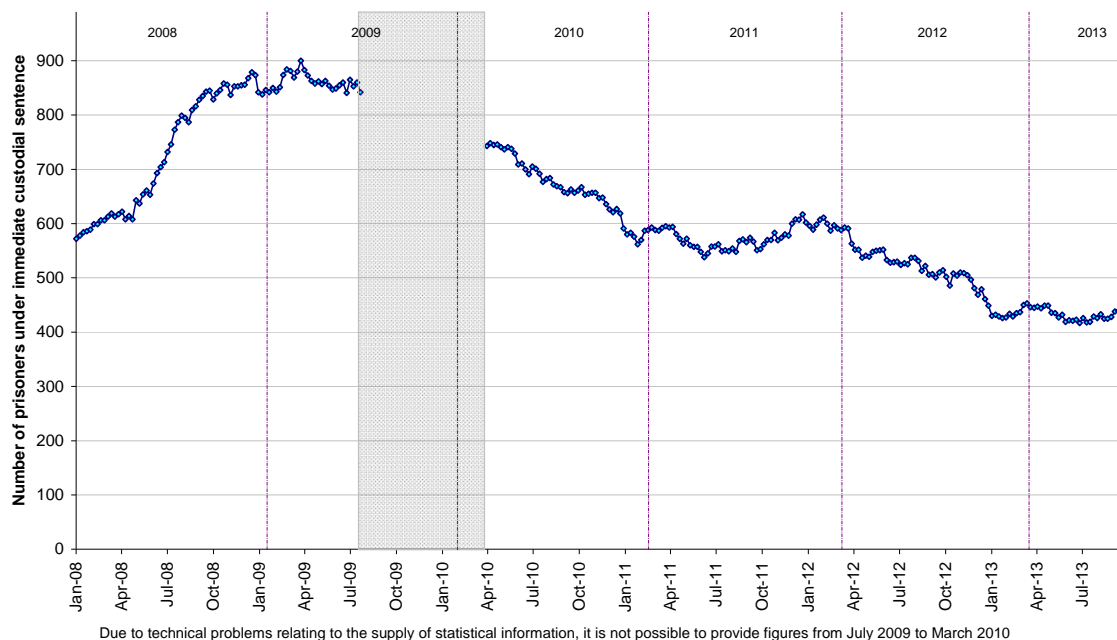
- Immediate custodial sentences given for possession offences were for 239 days, or 7.9 months, on average. This is 6% longer than average sentence lengths given in Q3 2012 (225 days) and is the longest the average has been in the 5 years since the start of this bulletin. This is an increase of 81% or 3 and a half months, compared to the end of 2007.
- 972 offenders started a court order under probation supervision for possession offences (Table 9). This is down 5% from Q3 2012 and 31% from Q3 2011. These changes reflect the general trends in the number of possession offences dealt with over the period.
- The most common requirement placed on offenders starting court orders for possession offences was supervision - 37% of suspended sentence orders (SSOs) and 35% of community orders (COs). The proportion of offenders placed on the requirement to carry out unpaid work was lower - 24% of SSOs and 29% of COs, respectively. The use of unpaid work as a requirement has fallen over recent years – down 9 percentage points since Q3 2010 for COs and down 3 percentage points for SSOs over the same period.
- Where unpaid work requirements were placed upon those starting a community order for possession offences, 36% were for less than 80 hours and 47% were for 81 to 150 hours. For those starting suspended sentence orders, 16% were for under 80 hours and 56% were for 81 to 150 hours.

Figure 7: Number of offenders commencing a court order under probation supervision for possession of an offensive weapon, in England and Wales from Q1 2008 to Q3 2013



- 433 offenders were in prison serving a sentence for possession of an offensive weapon on 27 September 2013, down 16% from 514 a year ago and continuing the reductions seen in the prison population for this offence since early 2009. This trend comes despite the generally increasing use and length of custodial sentences for possession offences, and is likely to be primarily related to the reductions in the total number of offences dealt with over the period.

Figure 8: Prison population under sentence for possession of an offensive weapon⁵ (excludes recalls) in England and Wales, between 2008 and September 2013



New aggravated knife or offensive weapon possession offences:

- At present, a total of 123 offenders (89 adults, 34 juveniles,) have been dealt with in relation to one of the new aggravated knife possession offences that came into effect from 3 December 2012.
- Of the 34 juveniles, 16 offenders were aged between 10 and 15 when sentenced. (Sentencing guidelines differ for these age bands as explained on the last bullet point on page 4).
- Of the 107 cases involving the new offence of aggravated knife possession where offenders were aged 16 and over, 59 offenders or 55% have received a custodial sentence. Please note however that these figures are provisional and are likely to change significantly, particularly with the immediate custodial sentences likely to rise, once further sentences have been finalised.

⁵ Includes having an article with a blade or a point.

Appendix A: Statistical Tables

Table 1: Offences involving the possession of a knife or offensive weapon resulting in a caution or sentence, in England and Wales

Disposal Category	Number of offences and percentage change							% change, Q3 2012 to estimated Q3 2013
	Q3 2010	Q3 2011	Q3 2012	Q4 2012 ^E	Q1 2013 ^E	Q2 2013 ^E	Q3 2013 ^E	
Number of offences								
England and Wales¹	5,587	5,439	4,435	3,971	3,814	4,013	4,305	-3%
Caution ²	1,205	1,049	856	763	687	695	764	-11%
Absolute/Conditional discharge	233	213	175	113	134	118	159	-9%
Fine	226	245	189	150	175	181	188	-1%
Community sentence	1,793	1,655	1,228	1,121	1,045	1,115	1,163	-5%
Suspended sentence	643	673	579	535	572	618	641	11%
Immediate custody	1,290	1,398	1,207	1,122	1,069	1,091	1,196	-1%
Other disposal ³	197	206	201	167	132	195	194	-3%
percentage of total offences								
Caution ²	22%	19%	19%	19%	18%	17%	18%	
Absolute/Conditional discharge	4%	4%	4%	3%	4%	3%	4%	
Fine	4%	5%	4%	4%	5%	5%	4%	
Community sentence	32%	30%	28%	28%	27%	28%	27%	
Suspended sentence	12%	12%	13%	13%	15%	15%	15%	
Immediate custody	23%	26%	27%	28%	28%	27%	28%	
Other disposal ³	4%	4%	5%	4%	3%	5%	5%	

¹ England and Wales includes all 43 police force areas and the British Transport Police.

² Cautions include juveniles receiving reprimands and warnings or youth cautions. Youth Cautions were introduced on April 8th 2013 replacing reprimands and warnings for young offenders. The guidance is published at the link <http://www.justice.gov.uk/out-of-court-disposals>

³ Represent cases where an offender may have been convicted, but is awaiting further sentencing

^E Denotes where estimated figures have been used. The estimates are based on historical data changes. Please see explanatory notes of bulletin for further details.

Data Source and Quality

These figures have been drawn from the police's administrative IT system which, as with any large scale recording system, is subject to possible errors with data entry and processing. The figures are provisional and subject to change as more information becomes available.

Table 2: Offences involving the possession of a knife or offensive weapon resulting in a caution or sentence by age group, in England and Wales

Disposal Category	Number of offences and percentages							% change, Q3 2012 to estimated Q3 2013
	Q3 2010	Q3 2011	Q3 2012	Q4 2012 ^E	Q1 2013 ^E	Q2 2013 ^E	Q3 2013 ^E	
Number of offences								
Aged 10 to 17	1,064	916	693	663	630	639	654	-6%
Reprimands & warnings/Youth cautions ¹	295	230	193	176	202	176	187	-3%
Absolute/conditional discharge	29	24	13	14	19	16	20	*
Fine	2	1		1	2	1	0	*
Community sentence	593	501	379	350	321	329	349	-8%
Immediate custody	112	115	77	78	59	79	64	-17%
Other disposal ³	33	42	31	44	27	38	34	*
percentage of total offences								
Reprimands & warnings/Youth cautions ¹	28%	25%	28%	27%	32%	28%	29%	
Absolute/conditional discharge	3%	3%	2%	2%	3%	3%	3%	
Fine	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	
Community sentence	56%	55%	55%	53%	51%	51%	53%	
Immediate custody	11%	13%	11%	12%	9%	12%	10%	
Other disposal ³	3%	5%	4%	7%	4%	6%	5%	
Number of offences								
Aged 18 and over	4,523	4,522	3,741	3,308	3,184	3,374	3,651	-2%
Caution	910	810	663	587	485	519	577	-13%
Absolute/Conditional discharge	204	189	162	99	115	102	139	-14%
Fine	224	244	189	149	173	180	188	-1%
Community sentence	1,200	1,154	849	771	724	786	814	-4%
Suspended sentence	643	673	579	535	572	618	641	11%
Immediate custody	1,178	1,282	1,129	1,044	1,010	1,012	1,132	0%
Other disposal ³	164	164	170	123	105	157	160	-6%
percentage of total offences								
Caution	20%	18%	18%	18%	15%	15%	16%	
Absolute/Conditional discharge	5%	4%	4%	3%	4%	3%	4%	
Fine	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	
Community sentence	27%	26%	23%	23%	23%	23%	22%	
Suspended sentence	14%	15%	15%	16%	18%	18%	18%	
Immediate custody	26%	28%	30%	32%	32%	30%	31%	
Other disposal ³	4%	4%	5%	4%	3%	5%	4%	

¹ Since April 8th 2013 youth cautions were introduced replacing reprimands and warnings for young offenders. The guidance is published at the link <http://www.justice.gov.uk/out-of-court-disposals>

² The difference between the totals in Table 1 and the adult/juvenile breakdowns is where there is no age recorded on the system.

³ Represent cases where an offender may have been convicted, but is awaiting further sentencing

^E Denotes where estimated figures have been used. The estimates are based on historical data changes. Please see explanatory notes of bulletin for further details.

*Indicates that one or more of the comparative numbers are less than 50. For small numbers this could give misleading percentage changes.

Data Source and Quality

These figures have been drawn from the police's administrative IT system which, as with any large scale recording system, is subject to possible errors with data entry and processing. The figures are provisional and subject to change as more information becomes available.

Table 3: Offences involving the possession of a knife or offensive weapon resulting in a caution or sentence by type of offence, in England and Wales

Disposal Category	Number of offences and percentages							% change, Q3 2012 to estimated Q3 2013
	Q3 2010	Q3 2011	Q3 2012	Q4 2012 ^E	Q1 2013 ^E	Q2 2013 ^E	Q3 2013 ^E	
Number of offences								
Possession of an article with a blade or point	2,921	3,027	2,509	2,303	2,158	2,418	2,560	2%
Caution ¹	432	409	374	349	288	327	343	-8%
Absolute/Conditional discharge	142	134	96	74	85	84	106	10%
Fine	127	134	122	91	105	119	107	-12%
Community sentence	1,002	977	747	688	621	688	720	-4%
Suspended sentence	370	390	337	316	343	379	402	19%
Immediate custody	741	864	725	685	647	697	774	7%
Other disposal ²	107	119	108	100	69	124	108	0%
percentage of total offences								
Caution ¹	15%	14%	15%	15%	13%	14%	13%	
Absolute/Conditional discharge	5%	4%	4%	3%	4%	3%	4%	
Fine	4%	4%	5%	4%	5%	5%	4%	
Community sentence	34%	32%	30%	30%	29%	28%	28%	
Suspended sentence	13%	13%	13%	14%	16%	16%	16%	
Immediate custody	25%	29%	29%	30%	30%	29%	30%	
Other disposal ²	4%	4%	4%	4%	3%	5%	4%	
Number of offences								
Possession of an offensive weapon	2,666	2,412	1,926	1,668	1,656	1,595	1,745	-9%
Caution ¹	773	640	482	414	399	368	421	-13%
Absolute/Conditional discharge	91	79	79	39	49	34	53	-33%
Fine	99	111	67	59	70	62	81	21%
Community sentence	791	678	481	433	424	427	443	-8%
Suspended sentence	273	283	242	219	229	239	239	-1%
Immediate custody	549	534	482	437	422	394	422	-12%
Other disposal ²	90	87	93	67	63	71	86	-8%
percentage of total offences								
Caution ¹	29%	27%	25%	25%	24%	23%	24%	
Absolute/Conditional discharge	3%	3%	4%	2%	3%	2%	3%	
Fine	4%	5%	3%	4%	4%	4%	5%	
Community sentence	30%	28%	25%	26%	26%	27%	25%	
Suspended sentence	10%	12%	13%	13%	14%	15%	14%	
Immediate custody	21%	22%	25%	26%	25%	25%	24%	
Other disposal ²	3%	4%	5%	4%	4%	4%	5%	

¹ Cautions include juveniles receiving reprimands and warnings or youth cautions. Youth Cautions were introduced on April 8th 2013 replacing reprimands and warnings for young offenders. The guidance is published at the link <http://www.justice.gov.uk/out-of-court-disposals>

² Represent cases where an offender may have been convicted, but is awaiting further sentencing

^E Denotes where estimated figures have been used. The estimates are based on historical data changes. Please see explanatory notes of bulletin for further details.

Data Source and Quality

These figures have been drawn from the police's administrative IT system which, as with any large scale recording system, is subject to possible errors with data entry and processing. The figures are provisional and subject to change as more information becomes available.

Table 4: Custodial sentence proportions for knife and offensive weapon possession offences, by sentence length, in England and Wales¹

Sentence length	Proportion of sentence lengths						
	Q3 2010	Q3 2011	Q3 2012	Q4 2012	Q1 2013	Q2 2013	Q3 2013
	percentage of total offences						
Up to and including 3 months	38%	41%	39%	33%	36%	38%	34%
Over 3 months and up to and including 6 months	31%	28%	26%	32%	28%	28%	26%
Over 6 months	31%	31%	35%	36%	37%	34%	41%

¹ England and Wales includes all 43 police force areas and the British Transport Police.

² Please note that the above calculations are based on the current figures and not the estimates used in Tables 1 to 3. This table will be updated in future editions to match tables 1 to 3.

Data Source and Quality

These figures have been drawn from the police's administrative IT system which, as with any large scale recording system, is subject to possible errors with data entry and processing. The figures are provisional and subject to change as more information becomes available.

Table 5: Average sentence length of immediate custodial sentences for knife and offensive weapon possession offences, in England and Wales

	Average Sentence length							% change, Q3 2012 to Q3 2013
	Q3 2010	Q3 2011	Q3 2012	Q4 2012	Q1 2013	Q2 2013	Q3 2013	
	average sentence length (days)							
England and Wales¹	194	192	225	217	225	205	239	6%

¹ England and Wales includes all 43 police force areas and the British Transport Police.

² Please note that the above calculations are based on the current figures and not the estimates used in Tables 1 to 3. This table will be updated in future editions to match tables 1 to 3.

Data Source and Quality

These figures have been drawn from the police's administrative IT system which, as with any large scale recording system, is subject to possible errors with data entry and processing. The figures are provisional and subject to change as more information becomes available.

Table 6: Number of previous convictions or cautions for the possession of a knife or offensive weapon for offenders convicted or cautioned for a possession offence in 12 months ending September 2013, in England and Wales

Disposal Category	Number of previous convictions/cautions				Total
	0	1	2	3 or more	
	number of offenders				
England and Wales¹	11,056	2,300	754	575	14,685
Caution ²	2,704	95	17	9	2,825
Absolute/Conditional discharge	369	73	21	14	477
Fine	520	105	17	11	653
Community sentence	3,332	625	155	85	4,197
Suspended sentence	1,543	423	133	105	2,204
Immediate custody	2,074	851	368	318	3,611
Other disposal ³	514	128	43	33	718
	percentage				
Caution ²	24%	4%	2%	2%	
Absolute/Conditional discharge	3%	3%	3%	2%	
Fine	5%	5%	2%	2%	
Community sentence	30%	27%	21%	15%	
Suspended sentence	14%	18%	18%	18%	
Immediate custody	19%	37%	49%	55%	
Other disposal ³	5%	6%	6%	6%	

¹ England and Wales includes all 43 police force areas and the British Transport Police.

² Cautions include juveniles receiving reprimands and warnings or youth cautions. Youth Cautions were introduced on April 8th 2013 replacing reprimands and warnings for young offenders. The guidance is published at the link <http://www.justice.gov.uk/out-of-court-disposals>

³ Represent cases where an offender may have been convicted, but is awaiting further sentencing

Data Source and Quality

These figures have been drawn from the police's administrative IT system which, as with any large scale recording system, is subject to possible errors with data entry and processing. The figures are provisional and subject to change as more information

Table 7: Number of previous convictions or cautions for the possession of a knife or offensive weapon for offenders convicted or cautioned for a possession offence 12 months ending September 2013, split by age group in England and Wales

Disposal Category	Number of previous convictions/cautions				Total
	0	1	2	3 or more	
	number of offenders				
Aged 10 to 17	2,097	221	39	11	2,368
Reprimands & warnings/Youth cautions ²	696	9			705
Absolute/Conditional discharge	48	9	1	2	60
Fine	5				5
Community sentence	1,130	139	19	1	1,289
Immediate custody	128	49	14	7	198
Other disposal ³	90	15	5	1	111
	percentage				
Caution ²	33%	4%	*	*	
Absolute/Conditional discharge	2%	4%	*	*	
Fine	0%	0%	*	*	
Community sentence	54%	63%	*	*	
Immediate custody	6%	22%	*	*	
Other disposal ³	4%	7%	*	*	
Aged 18 and over	8,956	2,079	715	564	12,314
Caution ²	2,008	86	17	9	2,120
Absolute/Conditional discharge	321	64	20	12	417
Fine	515	105	17	11	648
Community sentence	2,200	486	136	84	2,906
Suspended sentence	1,543	423	133	105	2,204
Immediate custody	1,945	802	354	311	3,412
Other disposal ³	424	113	38	32	607
	percentage				
Caution ²	22%	4%	2%	2%	
Absolute/Conditional discharge	4%	3%	3%	2%	
Fine	6%	5%	2%	2%	
Community sentence	25%	23%	19%	15%	
Suspended sentence	17%	20%	19%	19%	
Immediate custody	22%	39%	50%	55%	
Other disposal ³	5%	5%	5%	6%	

¹ England and Wales includes all 43 police force areas and the British Transport Police.

² Since April 8th 2013 youth cautions were introduced replacing reprimands and warnings for young offenders. The guidance is published at the link <http://www.justice.gov.uk/out-of-court-disposals>

³ Represent cases where an offender may have been convicted, but is awaiting further sentencing

Data Source and Quality

These figures have been drawn from the police's administrative IT system which, as with any large scale recording system, is subject to possible errors with data entry and processing. The figures are provisional and subject to change as more information

Table 8: Offences involving threatening with a knife or offensive weapon resulting in a caution or sentence, in England and Wales Q1 2013 to Q3 2013

Disposal Category	Number of offences			Total
	Adults	Juveniles		
		10-15	16-17	
England and Wales¹	89	16	18	123
Caution ²	3	2	0	5
Absolute/Conditional discharge	0	0	0	0
Fine	0	0	0	0
Community sentence	7	12	8	27
Suspended sentence	19	0	0	19
Immediate custody	49	2	10	61
Other disposal ³	11	0	0	11

¹ England and Wales includes all 43 police force areas and the British Transport Police.

² Cautions include juveniles receiving reprimands and warnings or youth cautions. Youth Cautions were introduced on April 8th 2013 replacing reprimands and warnings for young offenders. The guidance is published at the link <http://www.justice.gov.uk/out-of-court-disposals>

³ Other disposals may represent cases where an offender has been convicted, but is awaiting further sentencing. There were 4 individuals with an other disposal reported for Q1 in the last publication, all of which have received a further sentence

Data Source and Quality

These figures have been drawn from the police's administrative IT system which, as with any large scale recording system, is subject to possible errors with data entry and processing. The figures are provisional and subject to change as more information becomes available.

Table 9: Offenders commencing a court order under probation supervision for possession of an offensive weapon¹, in England and Wales

Number of starts and percentages								
Court order starts	Q3 2010	Q3 2011	Q3 2012	Q4 2012	Q1 2013	Q2 2013	Q3 2013	% change, Q3 2012 to Q3 2013
number of starts								
England and Wales	1,457	1,401	1,018	1,084	895	927	972	-5%
Community order	980	924	648	662	530	577	583	-10%
Suspended sentence order	467	475	368	422	365	348	388	5%
Pre CJA orders	10	2	2	0	0	2	1	*
percentage of total starts								
Community order	67%	66%	64%	61%	59%	62%	60%	
Suspended sentence order	32%	34%	36%	39%	41%	38%	40%	
Pre CJA orders	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	

¹ Includes having an article with a blade or a point.

*Indicates that one or more of the comparative numbers are less than 50. For small numbers this could give misleading percentage changes.

Data Source and Quality

These figures have been drawn from administrative IT systems, which, as with any large scale recording system, are subject to possible errors with data entry and processing. All data is provisional.

Table 10: Requirement starts for possession of offensive weapon¹, in England and Wales

Number of requirements and percentages								
	Q3 2010	Q3 2011	Q3 2012	Q4 2012	Q1 2013	Q2 2013	Q3 2013	% change, Q3 2012 to Q3 2013
number of requirements								
Community order	1,518	1,515	1,065	1,049	869	928	935	-12%
Unpaid Work	571	474	312	335	259	276	273	-13%
Supervision	481	509	381	345	301	314	326	-14%
Curfew	147	129	71	57	66	69	69	-3%
Accredited program	87	80	66	49	59	52	50	*
Specified activity	90	151	114	37	94	119	108	-5%
Drug treatment	54	46	39	95	23	33	35	*
Alcohol treatment	49	57	44	93	34	27	45	*
Mental health	20	28	9	16	9	11	13	*
Exclusion	3	6	2	4	5	3	2	*
Residential	7	6	8	4	7	4	2	*
Attendance centre	7	22	13	10	9	17	11	*
Prohibited activity	2	7	6	4	3	3	1	*
percentage of total requirements								
Unpaid work	38%	31%	29%	32%	30%	30%	29%	
Supervision	32%	34%	36%	33%	35%	34%	35%	
Other requirements	31%	35%	35%	35%	36%	36%	36%	
number of requirements								
Suspended sentence order	823	898	658	767	642	621	623	-5%
Unpaid work	219	220	157	193	156	148	151	-4%
Supervision	297	315	246	274	232	233	232	-6%
Curfew	96	99	61	75	66	64	51	-16%
Accredited program	94	86	64	57	64	50	53	-17%
Specified activity	43	88	67	78	56	57	68	1%
Drug treatment	21	27	20	26	11	26	14	*
Alcohol treatment	33	38	33	35	33	18	32	*
Mental health	4	3	3	2	8	7	8	*
Exclusion	6	5	1	3	3	9	3	*
Residential	4	6	2	16	7	5	4	*
Attendance centre	2	5	2	2	2	3	2	*
Prohibited activity	4	6	2	6	4	1	5	*
percentage of total requirements								
Unpaid work	27%	24%	24%	25%	24%	24%	24%	
Supervision	36%	35%	37%	36%	36%	38%	37%	
Other requirements	37%	40%	39%	39%	40%	39%	39%	

¹ Includes having an article with a blade or a point.

*Indicates that one or more of the comparative numbers are less than 50. For small numbers this could give misleading percentage changes.

Data Source and Quality

These figures have been drawn from administrative IT systems, which, as with any large scale recording system, are subject to possible errors with data entry and processing. All data is provisional.

Table 11: Unpaid work requirements started by length of requirement given for possession of offensive weapon¹, in England and Wales

Number of requirements and percentages								
	Q3 2010	Q3 2011	Q3 2012	Q4 2012	Q1 2012	Q2 2013	Q3 2013	% change, Q3 2012 to Q3 2013
number of requirements								
Community order	604	512	323	368	270	271	260	-20%
0-80 hours	220	204	139	144	108	95	93	-33%
81-150 hours	267	213	128	165	112	109	121	-5%
151-199 hours	39	30	21	21	12	21	17	*
200-250 hours	70	63	34	36	34	43	27	*
251-300 hours	8	2	1	2	4	3	2	*
percentage of total requirements								
0-80 hours	36%	40%	43%	39%	40%	35%	36%	
81-150 hours	44%	42%	40%	45%	41%	40%	47%	
151-199 hours	6%	6%	7%	6%	4%	8%	7%	
200-250 hours	12%	12%	11%	10%	13%	16%	10%	
251-300 hours	1%	0%	0%	1%	1%	1%	1%	
number of requirements								
Suspended sentence order	229	219	167	206	169	148	140	-16%
0-80 hours	48	42	36	51	43	25	23	*
81-150 hours	116	117	93	106	86	82	78	-16%
151-199 hours	18	17	10	8	14	10	11	*
200-250 hours	42	41	26	38	25	29	28	*
251-300 hours	5	2	2	3	1	2	0	*
percentage of total requirements								
0-80 hours	21%	19%	22%	25%	25%	17%	16%	
81-150 hours	51%	53%	56%	51%	51%	55%	56%	
151-199 hours	8%	8%	6%	4%	8%	7%	8%	
200-250 hours	18%	19%	16%	18%	15%	20%	20%	
251-300 hours	2%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%	

¹ Includes having an article with a blade or a point.

*Indicates that one or more of the comparative numbers are less than 50. For small numbers this could give misleading percentage changes.

Data Source and Quality

These figures have been drawn from administrative IT systems, which, as with any large scale recording system, are subject to possible errors with data entry and processing. All data is provisional.

Explanatory notes

Data quality and sources

Tables 1 to 8

The statistics presented in tables 1 to 8 in this Bulletin are drawn from an extract of data held on the Police National Computer (PNC) as at 1 November 2013.

The PNC is a large administrative database containing information about police cautions and court convictions held by individual offenders in England and Wales. As an administrative system, the PNC is regularly updated as new information about particular individuals becomes available. For example, an offender with previous convictions may have recently been charged with another offence, appeared in court against this charge and then been subsequently convicted of this offence. This information would then be updated accordingly against that individual's record in the PNC.

As these updates involve some element of manual data entry alongside more automated systems, there can be delays in the database becoming updated with the latest information about an offender's convictions. As such, the number of cautions/convictions recorded in the PNC extract for knife possession offences in recent quarters, in particular for the most recent quarter included in this bulletin, is likely to be lower than the actual number of cautions/convictions given in the period.

In addition, the different disposals recorded in the PNC extract for knife possession offences in recent quarters are also subject to some change. This is partly due to the delays in updating recent court outcomes on the PNC, but is also due to the fact that, while some individuals will have been convicted of a knife possession offence in a magistrate's court during the quarter, information about the disposal they received is not yet available as the case has been passed to the Crown court for sentencing at a later date. These cases will be updated when information about the final sentence given for the offence becomes available.

As a result of these updates, the statistics presented in this bulletin are based on estimates of what the final sentencing outcomes will be for the latest period once all data updates have been made.

The estimates were introduced from the previous edition of this bulletin and followed detailed analysis that tracked changes in the disposal figures from those initially published for each quarter to those released over the following year as data held on the PNC was updated with new information.

The background to and methodology used to derive these estimates was published in the October to December 2012 release of this bulletin – [click here for link](#) – and we will continue to monitor the method used to estimate the final disposal outcomes in future editions to this bulletin to ensure that the estimated figures are realistic.

Tables 9 to 11 and Figure 7

The probation data has been processed from data collected and held centrally by the Ministry of Justice. The data are drawn from the local probation administrative IT systems from each of the 35 probation trusts in England and Wales. The figures showing the numbers starting court orders relate to the number of *offenders* starting probation supervision in a given period. The numbers drawn from the PNC data in tables 1 to 5 relate to the total number of *offences* committed by offenders given particular disposals, which are likely to be greater than the number of offenders. Also, the probation data shows offenders convicted of the more general offence of 'possession of an offensive weapon'. This will include possession of knives, as well the particular offence of 'possession of an article with a blade or point', but these cannot be separately distinguished in the probation data.

Prison population data presented in this brief are drawn from the prison administrative IT systems. The figures showing the numbers under sentence refer to the number of *offenders* serving a custodial sentence. Figures drawn from PNC data refer to the number of *offences* committed by offenders given particular disposals. Prison establishments routinely provide records of the numbers of persons held in custody at the end of each month, broadly subdivided according to age, sex, custody type and sentence length. The records are collated and processed centrally. However, data recorded by prisons only show the numbers serving a sentence for the general offence of "possession of an offensive weapon". This offence includes the possession of a knife but can also include possession of other dangerous weapons (excluding firearms).

Due to technical problems relating to the supply of data for statistical purposes it has not been possible to provide data relating to the prison population for specific offence types from July 2009 to March 2010.

Glossary

This glossary provides a brief description of the main terms used in the Commentary section of this report. For further information, please contact the Justice Statistics Analytical Services division using the details provided in the contacts section at the end of this bulletin.

Adult: An offender aged 18 and over.

Caution: A warning given to adults offenders who admit guilt and agree to be cautioned. They are issued on the instructions of a senior police officer where there is sufficient evidence for a conviction and it is not considered to be in the public interest to institute criminal proceedings.

Community sentence: An alternate to custodial sentence (sending offenders to prison) which allows offenders to make amends for their crimes. For juveniles the main community sentence used are the referral order and the Youth Rehabilitation Order (YRO). With a community sentence there are specific things the offender can, can't and must do while serving their sentence. Elements of custodial sentence include;

- Supervision,
- Unpaid work,
- Specified activities,
- Prohibited activities,
- Accredited programmes,
- Curfew, exclusion,
- Residence,
- Mental health treatment,
- Drug rehabilitation,
- Alcohol treatment and attendance centre requirement for under 25s

England and Wales – Total figures for England and Wales now include all police forces in England and Wales and the British Transport Police (BTP). The Home Office is responsible for policing the 43 police forces in England and Wales. There are also other authorities who prosecute offenders such as:

- Department for Work and Pensions (DWP),
- HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC),
- Ministry of Defence (MOD) and
- British Transport Police (BTP).

Immediate custody: Unsuspended imprisonment for adults aged 21 or over and detention in a young offender institution for those aged 18 to 20. The maximum sentence available is 4 years for possession of a bladed article in a public place or an offensive weapon. Juveniles aged 12 to 17 may receive a detention and training order of 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 18 or 24 months

Juvenile: An offender between the ages 10 and 17.

Offences included: The PNC data (tables 1 to 5) produced in this brief are the number of offences committed **not** the number of offenders. The offences relate to possession offences rather than offences where a knife was used. The offence codes included in the dataset are as follows:

- **00811** – Possession of offensive weapons without lawful authority or reasonable excuse. Prevention of Crime Act 1953 Section 1.
- **00828** – Possession of offensive weapons without lawful authority or reasonable excuse on school premises. Criminal Justice Act 1988 Section 139 A (2) as amended by Offensive Weapons Act 1996 Section 4 (1).
- **00826** – Having an article with a blade or a point in a public place. Criminal Justice Act 1988 Section 139 (1) as amended by Offensive Weapons Act 1996 Section 3 (1).
- **00827** – Having an article with a blade or a point on school premises. Criminal Justice Act 1988 Section 139 (2) as amended by Offensive Weapons Act 1996 Section 4 (1).

New offence codes include: The PNC data used to produce table 8 in this brief are the number of offences committed **not** the number of offenders. The offences relate to threatening offences rather than offences where a knife was used. The offence codes included in the dataset are as follows:

- **00861** – Threaten with an offensive weapon in a public place.
- **00862** – Threaten with a blade/sharply pointed article on a school premises
- **00863** – Threaten with an offensive weapon on a school premises.
- **00864** – Threaten with a blade/sharply pointed article in a public place.

Offensive weapon: Any article made or adapted for use for causing injury to the person, or intended by the person having it with him for such. Examples includes: a swordstick, a hollow walking-stick or cane containing a blade.

Reprimand and warning: Issued to juvenile first time offenders for minor offences. Reprimand and warning for juveniles are equivalent of cautions for adults.

Youth cautions: Introduced on April 8th 2013. They are formal out-of-court disposals for young offenders (aged 10 to 17) and intended to allow a more flexible response to offending than the preceding Final Warning Scheme.

Suspended Sentence: A custody sentence of less than 12 months, suspended for a period ranging from six months to two years available for **adult** only.

Contact points for further information

Current and previous editions of this publication are available for download at www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ministry-of-justice/series/knife-possession-sentencing-quarterly

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

Tel: 020 3334 3536

Other enquiries about these statistics should be directed to:

Ministry of Justice
Justice Statistics Analytical Services
7th floor
102 Petty France
London SW1H 9AJ

General enquiries about the statistical work of the Ministry of Justice can be e-mailed to: statistics.enquiries@justice.gsi.gov.uk

General information about the official statistics system of the UK is available from www.statistics.gov.uk

Other knife and sharp object related statistical releases

Other government departments also release statistics relating to knives and sharp objects. Below are some links and brief outlines of other available sources.

- The Home Office provide a guidance document regarding the law for knives and offensive weapons:

www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/186911/Knives_and_offensive_weapons_information_GDS_FAQ.pdf

www.gov.uk/find-out-if-i-can-buy-or-carry-a-knife

- The Home Office also publish statistics of offences involving knives and sharp instruments. This is contained within the *Crime in England and Wales* statistical bulletin and has a section called *Offences involving knives and sharp instruments*.

www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/crime-stats/crime-statistics/period-ending-june-2013/stb-crime-in-england-and-wales--year-ending-june-2013.html#tab-Offences-involving-knives-and-sharp-instruments

- The Department for Health release hospital admission data for assaults on an ad hoc basis. Within this data there is a category for X99 - *Assault by sharp object*. The link for the most recently released publication is listed below and the data can usually be found in the *Monthly HES data – Monthly topic of interest section* of the HES online website.

www.hscic.gov.uk/hes

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statistics.enquiries@justice.gsi.gov.uk