



Ministry
of Justice

Knife Possession Sentencing Quarterly Brief April to June 2013 England and Wales

Ministry of Justice
Statistics Bulletin

Published 19 September 2013

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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 26 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 (which could be a knife). The detailed offence codes used in this bulletin are outlined in the glossary section.

Also included in this bulletin for the first time are 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 17)

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 are included for the first time within this 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 previous 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-march-2013/stb-crime--period-ending-march-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:

www.justice.gov.uk/statistics/criminal-justice/knife-possession

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.

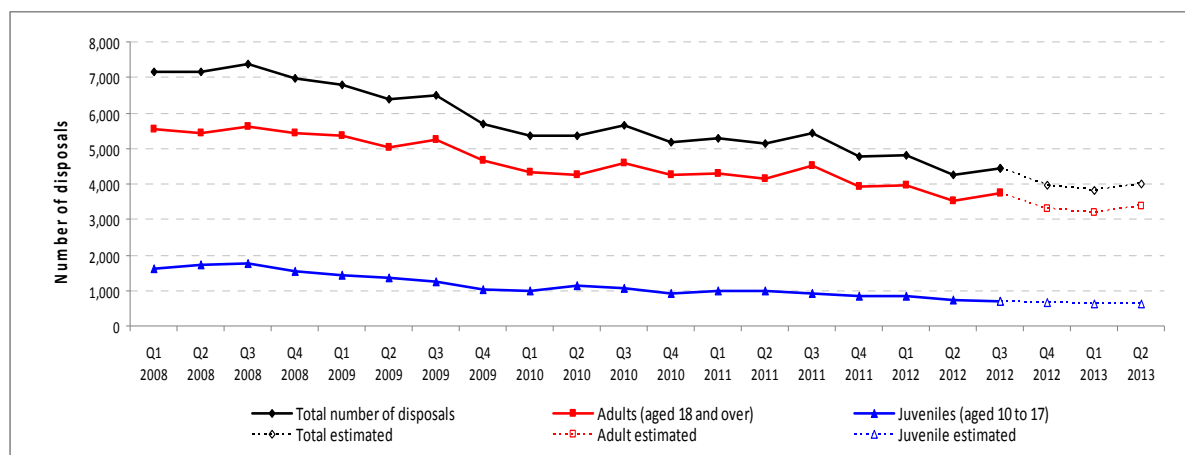
³ For legislation, see: www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2012/10/contents/enacted

Key findings

Estimates indicate that the final disposal figures for Q2 2013 will show:

- Exactly 4,000 disposals were given for possession of a knife or an offensive weapon, 6% lower than in Q2 2012. The latest result continues the downward trend for the number of cautions or convictions given for these offences over the last four years. The number of disposals for possession offences is now 44% lower than in Q2 2008.
- Over 5 times as many adults offenders (3,364) were cautioned or convicted for possession offences than juveniles offenders (636) - 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. Since Q2 2012, the number of disposals given to juveniles for possession offences dropped by 13% while, for adults, the number fell by 5%

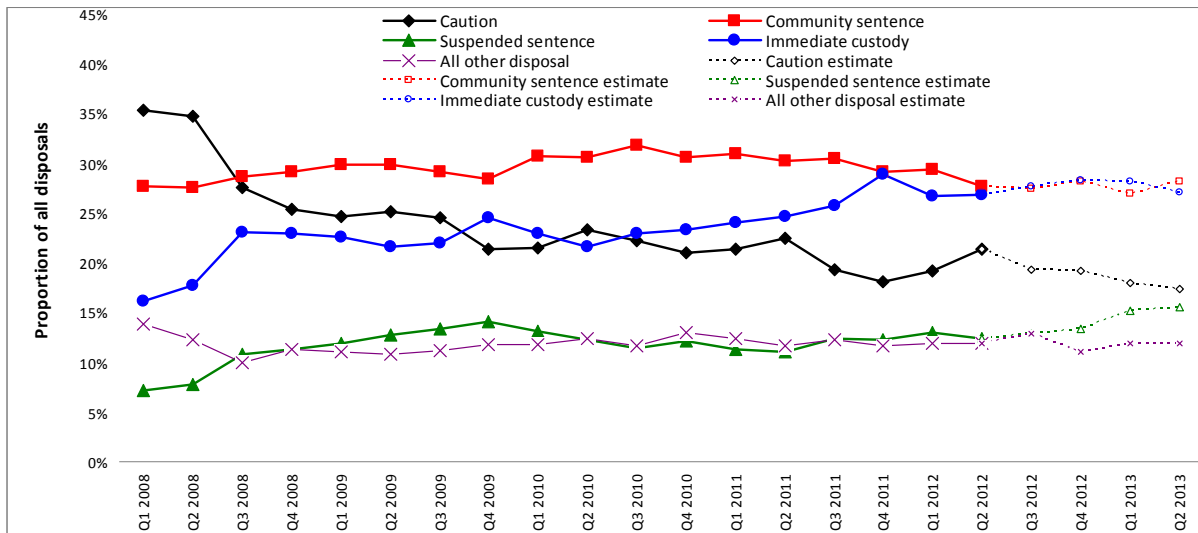
Figure 1: Number of disposals given for knife and offensive weapon possession by age, in England and Wales, between Q1 2008 and Q2 2013



- The most common disposals for possession of a knife or an offensive weapon were a community sentence (28%) and an immediate custodial sentence (27% cent).
- 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 four quarters. In the same time period the proportion of cautions has declined by 4 percentage points to 17%, its lowest point over the last 5 years. Offsetting this, the proportion of offences resulting in suspended sentences has increased by 4 percentage points to 16%. However, 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 2007 - particularly during 2008 when changes were made to the sentencing guidelines for knife possession as outlined earlier in this bulletin. Contrasting to this, the proportion of possession offences resulting in a police caution has fallen since the end of 2007.

Figure 2: Proportion of type of disposal given for knife and offensive weapon possession in England and Wales, between Q1 2008 and Q2 2013



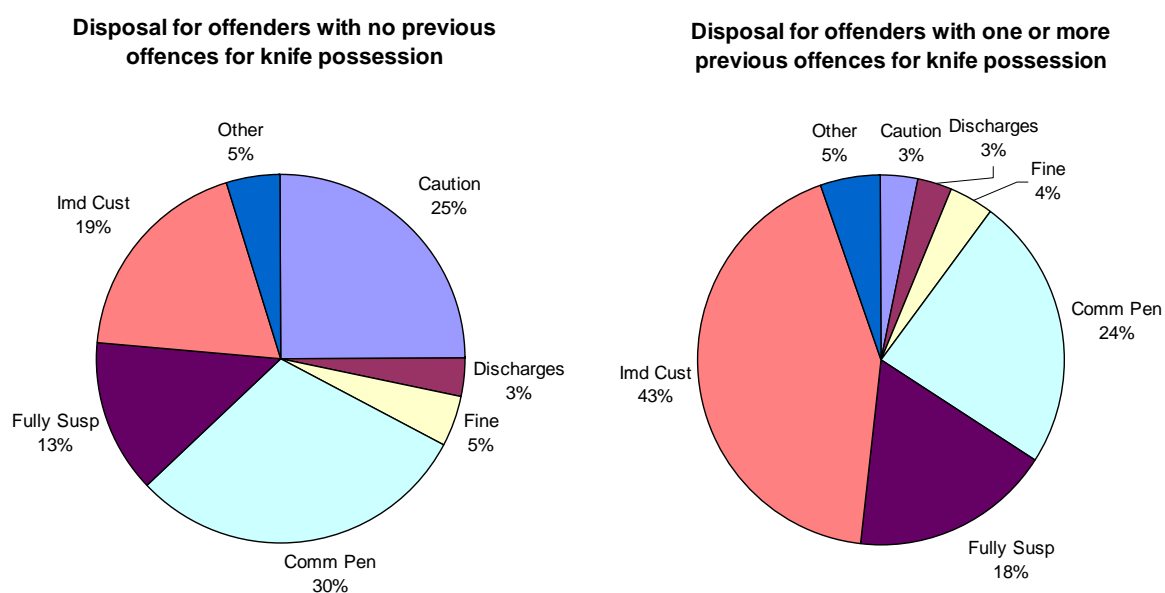
- Over half of all juveniles (52%) receiving disposals for possession offences were given a community sentence, while just over a quarter (27%) were given a reprimand or a warning. For juvenile offenders, 13% were given an immediate custodial sentence, up 2 percentage points since Q2 2012 and the highest proportion seen over the last 5 years. The proportion of juveniles given reprimands or warnings has decreased by 4 percentage points over the last year and is now 20 percentage points lower than in Q2 2008.
- Amongst adult offenders, nearly a third were given an immediate custodial sentence (30%), the same proportion as last year but significantly higher than 5 years ago (25%). Proportions of cautions have fallen in the last year - with 16% of adults given a caution in Q2 2013 compared to 19% in Q2 2012.

Figure 3: Proportion of type of disposal given for knife and offensive weapon possession for juveniles and adults, in England and Wales, Q2 2012 and Q2 2013



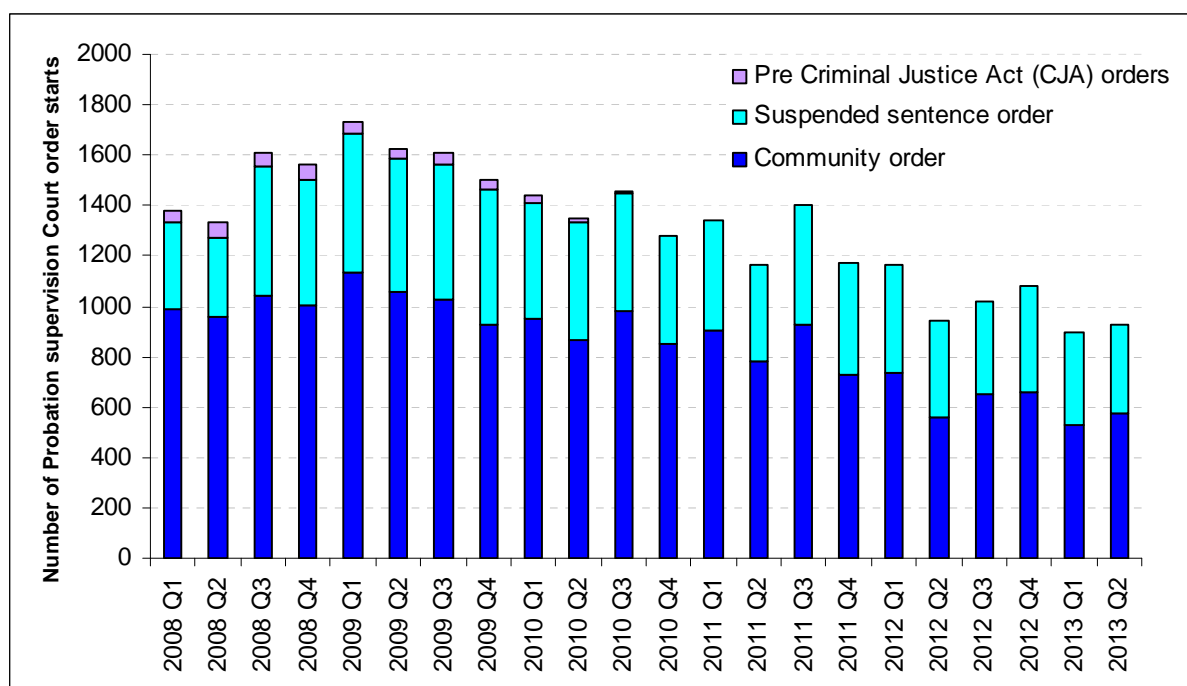
- The types of disposal given for possession are correlated with the number of previous possession offences offenders have been convicted or cautioned for. For offenders with no previous offences for possession of a knife or offensive weapon, 25% received a caution in the 12 months ending June 2013 whereas 30% received a community sentence and 19% were given immediate custody. However, for offenders with at least one previous possession offence on their record, 43% were sentenced to immediate custody in the 12 months ending June 2013, while only 3% received a caution.
- Juvenile offenders having more than one previous knife possession offence on their record are most likely to receive a community sentence (60%) or immediate custody (26%). Only 3% of those juvenile offenders with one previous offence received a reprimand or warning.
- The custody rate of adult offenders rises in relation with their number of previous possession offences, with 56% 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 4: 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 June 2013



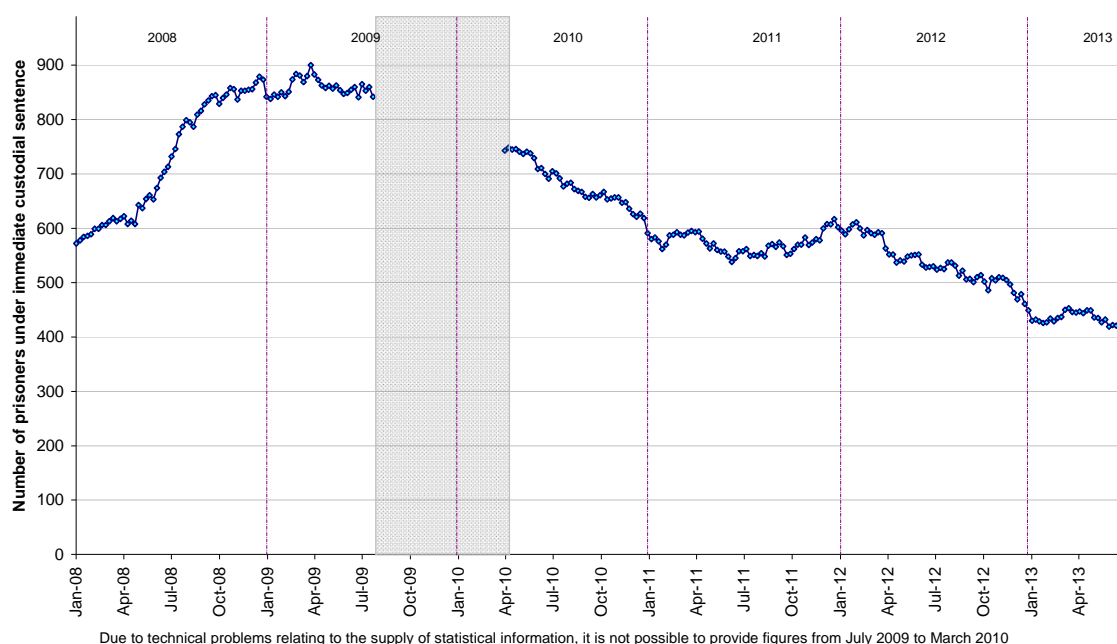
- Immediate custodial sentences given for possession offences were for 209 days, or 6.9 months, on average. This is 9% shorter than average sentence lengths given in Q2 2012 (230 days) and is the first time for 2 years that the average has decreased on the equivalent quarter a year earlier. Over the longer term, however, average sentence lengths for possession offences are around 58% or over 2 and a half months, longer than they were at the end of 2007.
- 927 offenders started a court order under probation supervision for possession offences. This is down 1% from Q2 2012 and 21% from Q2 2011. These changes reflect the general trends in the number of possession offences dealt with over the period.

Figure 5: Number of offenders commencing a court order under probation supervision for possession of an offensive weapon, in England and Wales from Q1 2008 to Q2 2013



- The most common requirement placed on offenders starting court orders for possession offences was supervision - 38% of suspended sentence orders (SSOs) and 34% of community orders (COs). The proportion of offenders placed on the requirement to carry out unpaid work was lower - 24% of SSOs and 30% of COs, respectively. The use of unpaid work as a requirement has fallen over recent years – down 3 percentage points since Q2 2011 for both SSOs and COs .
- Where unpaid work requirements were placed upon those starting a community order for possession offences, 35% were for less than 80 hours and 40% were for 81 to 150 hours. For those starting suspended sentence orders, 17% were for under 80 hours and 55% were for 81 to 150 hours.
- 417 offenders were in prison serving a sentence for possession of an offensive weapon on 28 June 2013, down 21% from 530 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 6: Prison population under sentence for possession of an offensive weapon⁴ (excludes recalls) in England and Wales, between 2008 and June 2013



New aggravated knife or offensive weapon possession offences:

- At present, a total of 63 offenders (22 juveniles, 41 adults) 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 22 juveniles, 12 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 51 cases involving the new offence of aggravated knife possession where offenders were aged 16 and over, 25 offenders or 49% 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.

⁴ 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

Number of offences and percentage change								
Disposal Category	Q2 2010	Q2 2011	Q2 2012	Q3 2012 ^E	Q4 2012 ^E	Q1 2013 ^E	Q2 2013 ^E	% change, Q2 2012 to estimated Q2 2013
Number of offences								
England and Wales ¹	5,330	5,146	4,257	4,442	3,971	3,811	4,000	-6%
Caution ²	1,209	1,153	910	858	762	684	696	-24%
Absolute/Conditional discharge	235	184	138	176	114	131	118	-14%
Fine	205	225	186	190	152	170	185	-1%
Community sentence	1,640	1,556	1,175	1,219	1,116	1,026	1,126	-4%
Suspended sentence	659	565	529	570	532	577	622	18%
Immediate custody	1,158	1,270	1,139	1,226	1,123	1,072	1,080	-5%
Other disposal ³	224	193	180	203	172	151	173	-4%
percentage of total offences								
Caution ²	23%	22%	21%	19%	19%	18%	17%	
Absolute/Conditional discharge	4%	4%	3%	4%	3%	3%	3%	
Fine	4%	4%	4%	4%	4%	4%	5%	
Community sentence	31%	30%	28%	27%	28%	27%	28%	
Suspended sentence	12%	11%	12%	13%	13%	15%	16%	
Immediate custody	22%	25%	27%	28%	28%	28%	27%	
Other disposal ³	4%	4%	4%	5%	4%	4%	4%	

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

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

Number of offences and percentages								
Disposal Category	Q2 2010	Q2 2011	Q2 2012	Q3 2012 ^E	Q4 2012 ^E	Q1 2013 ^E	Q2 2013 ^E	% change, Q2 2012 to estimated Q2 2013
Number of offences								
Aged 10 to 17	1,129	979	731	697	662	628	636	-13%
Reprimands & warnings/Youth cautions ¹	363	291	227	195	175	200	174	-23%
Absolute/conditional discharge	23	24	9	11	14	19	16	*
Fine	4	3	2	0	1	1	3	*
Community sentence	594	523	380	383	347	318	330	-13%
Immediate custody	99	111	79	78	78	61	84	6%
Other disposal ³	46	27	34	30	47	29	29	*
percentage of total offences								
Reprimands & warnings/Youth cautions ¹	32%	30%	31%	28%	26%	32%	27%	
Absolute/conditional discharge	2%	2%	1%	2%	2%	3%	3%	
Fine	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	
Community sentence	53%	53%	52%	55%	52%	51%	52%	
Immediate custody	9%	11%	11%	11%	12%	10%	13%	
Other disposal ³	4%	3%	5%	4%	7%	5%	5%	
Number of offences								
Aged 18 and over	4,200	4,165	3,525	3,745	3,309	3,183	3,364	-5%
Caution	846	862	683	663	587	484	522	-24%
Absolute/Conditional discharge	212	160	129	165	100	112	102	-21%
Fine	201	222	184	190	151	169	182	-1%
Community sentence	1,046	1,032	794	836	769	708	796	0%
Suspended sentence	658	564	529	570	532	577	622	18%
Immediate custody	1,059	1,159	1,060	1,148	1,045	1,011	996	-6%
Other disposal ³	178	166	146	173	125	122	144	-1%
percentage of total offences								
Caution	20%	21%	19%	18%	18%	15%	16%	
Absolute/Conditional discharge	5%	4%	4%	4%	3%	4%	3%	
Fine	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	
Community sentence	25%	25%	23%	22%	23%	22%	24%	
Suspended sentence	16%	14%	15%	15%	16%	18%	18%	
Immediate custody	25%	28%	30%	31%	32%	32%	30%	
Other disposal ³	4%	4%	4%	5%	4%	4%	4%	

¹ Since April 8th 2013 youth cautions were introduced replacing reprimands and warnings for young offenders

² The difference between the totals in Table 1 and the adult/juvenile breakdowns is where there is no age recorded on the system. For Q1 2011 five offenders had no age recorded. Two people receiving a caution, one person receiving a custodial sentence.

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

Number of offences and percentages								
Disposal Category	Q2 2010	Q2 2011	Q2 2012	Q3 2012 ^E	Q4 2012 ^E	Q1 2013 ^E	Q2 2013 ^E	% change, Q2 2012 to estimated Q2 2013
Possession of an article with a blade or point	Number of offences							
	2,903	2,855	2,407	2,514	2,302	2,154	2,406	0%
	473	482	402	376	349	286	328	-18%
	145	116	86	98	75	84	82	-5%
	131	139	108	122	92	103	121	12%
	930	921	708	741	683	616	698	-1%
	390	336	325	333	314	343	384	18%
	698	747	691	736	688	646	689	0%
	136	114	87	108	101	76	104	20%
	percentage of total offences							
Caution ¹	16%	17%	17%	15%	15%	13%	14%	
Absolute/Conditional discharge	5%	4%	4%	4%	3%	4%	3%	
Fine	5%	5%	4%	5%	4%	5%	5%	
Community sentence	32%	32%	29%	29%	30%	29%	29%	
Suspended sentence	13%	12%	14%	13%	14%	16%	16%	
Immediate custody	24%	26%	29%	29%	30%	30%	29%	
Other disposal ²	5%	4%	4%	4%	4%	4%	4%	
Possession of an offensive weapon	Number of offences							
	2,427	2,291	1,850	1,928	1,669	1,657	1,594	-14%
	736	671	508	482	413	398	368	-28%
	90	68	52	78	39	47	36	*
	74	86	78	68	60	67	64	-18%
	710	635	467	478	433	410	428	-8%
	269	229	204	237	218	234	238	17%
	460	523	448	490	435	426	391	-13%
	88	79	93	95	71	75	69	-26%
	percentage of total offences							
Caution ¹	30%	29%	27%	25%	25%	24%	23%	
Absolute/Conditional discharge	4%	3%	3%	4%	2%	3%	2%	
Fine	3%	4%	4%	4%	4%	4%	4%	
Community sentence	29%	28%	25%	25%	26%	25%	27%	
Suspended sentence	11%	10%	11%	12%	13%	14%	15%	
Immediate custody	19%	23%	24%	25%	26%	26%	25%	
Other disposal ²	4%	3%	5%	5%	4%	5%	4%	

¹ Cautions include juveniles receiving reprimands and warnings or youth cautions

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.

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

Sentence length	Proportion of sentence lengths						
	Q2 2010	Q2 2011	Q2 2012	Q3 2012	Q4 2012	Q1 2013	Q2 2013
	percentage of total offences						
Up to and including 3 months	40%	43%	37%	39%	32%	34%	38%
Over 3 months and up to and including 6 months	30%	28%	26%	26%	32%	27%	28%
Over 6 months	31%	29%	36%	35%	36%	38%	35%

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						
	Q2 2010	Q2 2011	Q2 2012	Q3 2012	Q4 2012	Q1 2013	Q2 2013
	average sentence length (days)						
England and Wales ¹	191	184	230	227	219	230	209
							-9%

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 June 2013, in England and Wales

Disposal Category	Number of previous convictions/cautions				
	0	1	2	3 or more	Total ³
	number of offenders				
England and Wales¹	11,245	2,297	782	577	14,901
Caution ²	2,800	90	18	12	2,920
Absolute/Conditional discharge	373	84	20	11	488
Fine	517	110	20	11	658
Community sentence	3,383	620	170	85	4,258
Suspended sentence	1,515	412	134	96	2,157
Immediate custody	2,129	860	382	323	3,694
Other disposal ³	528	121	38	39	726
	percentage of offenders				
Caution ²	25%	4%	2%	2%	
Absolute/Conditional discharge	3%	4%	3%	2%	
Fine	5%	5%	3%	2%	
Community sentence	30%	27%	22%	15%	
Suspended sentence	13%	18%	17%	17%	
Immediate custody	19%	37%	49%	56%	
Other disposal ³	5%	5%	5%	7%	

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

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 becomes available.

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 June 2013, split by age group in England and Wales

Number of previous convictions/cautions					
Disposal Category	0	1	2	3 or more	Total ³
number of offenders					
Aged 10 to 17	2,152	212	43	13	2,420
Cautions ³	708	7			715
Absolute/Conditional discharge	45	6	1	1	53
Fine	5				5
Community sentence	1,153	132	26	2	1,313
Immediate custody	153	51	12	8	224
Other disposal ⁴	88	16	4	2	110
percentage of offenders					
Cautions ³	33%	3%	*	*	
Absolute/Conditional discharge	2%	3%	*	*	
Fine	0%	0%	*	*	
Community sentence	54%	62%	*	*	
Immediate custody	7%	24%	*	*	
Other disposal ⁴	4%	8%	*	*	
number of offenders					
Aged 18 and over	9,089	2,085	739	564	12,477
Cautions ³	2,092	83	18	12	2,205
Absolute/Conditional discharge	328	78	19	10	435
Fine	512	110	20	11	653
Community sentence	2,228	488	144	83	2,943
Suspended sentence	1,515	412	134	96	2,157
Immediate custody	1,974	809	370	315	3,468
Other disposal ⁴	440	105	34	37	616
percentage of offenders					
Cautions ³	23%	4%	2%	2%	
Absolute/Conditional discharge	4%	4%	3%	2%	
Fine	6%	5%	3%	2%	
Community sentence	25%	23%	19%	15%	
Suspended sentence	17%	20%	18%	17%	
Immediate custody	22%	39%	50%	56%	
Other disposal ⁴	5%	5%	5%	7%	

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

² The difference between the totals in Table 9 and the adult/juvenile breakdowns is where there is no age recorded on the system.

³ Cautions include juveniles receiving reprimands and warnings or youth cautions

⁴ 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 becomes available.

Table 8: Offences involving threatening with a knife or offensive weapon resulting in a caution or sentence, in England and Wales in Q1 and Q2 2013

Disposal Category	Number of offences			Total
	Adults	Juveniles		
		10-15	16-17	
		Number of offences		
England and Wales ¹	41	12	10	63
Caution ²	2	2	0	4
Absolute/Conditional discharge	0	0	0	0
Fine	0	0	0	0
Community sentence	5	8	4	17
Suspended sentence	8	0	0	8
Immediate custody	19	2	6	27
Other disposal ³	7	0	0	7

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

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 supervision¹, in England and Wales

Number of starts and percentages								
Court order starts	Q2 2010	Q2 2011	Q2 2012	Q3 2012	Q4 2012	Q1 2013	Q2 2013	% change, Q2 2012 to Q2 2013
number of starts								
England and Wales	1,350	1,168	940	1,018	1,084	895	927	-1%
Community order	867	781	563	648	662	530	577	2%
Suspended sentence order	466	385	377	368	422	365	348	-8%
Pre CJA orders	17	2	0	2	0	0	2	*
percentage of total starts								
Community order	64%	67%	60%	64%	61%	59%	62%	
Suspended sentence order	35%	33%	40%	36%	39%	41%	38%	
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								
	Q2 2010	Q2 2011	Q2 2012	Q3 2012	Q4 2012	Q1 2013	Q2 2013	% change, Q2 2012 to Q2 2013
number of requirements								
Community order	1,393	1,248	911	1065	1049	869	928	2%
Unpaid Work	466	413	274	312	335	259	276	1%
Supervision	473	405	308	381	345	301	314	2%
Curfew	134	117	87	71	57	66	69	-21%
Accredited program	95	74	61	66	49	59	52	-15%
Specified activity	72	115	88	114	37	94	119	35%
Drug treatment	46	42	29	39	95	23	33	*
Alcohol treatment	46	39	31	44	93	34	27	*
Mental health	27	17	13	9	16	9	11	*
Exclusion	8	1	7	2	4	5	3	*
Residential	13	4	2	8	4	7	4	*
Attendance centre	7	18	10	13	10	9	17	*
Prohibited activity	6	3	1	6	4	3	3	*
percentage of total requirements								
Unpaid work	33%	33%	30%	29%	32%	30%	30%	
Supervision	34%	32%	34%	36%	33%	35%	34%	
Other requirements	33%	34%	36%	35%	35%	36%	36%	
number of requirements								
Suspended sentence order	817	682	674	658	767	642	621	-8%
Unpaid work	222	187	170	157	193	156	148	-13%
Supervision	305	242	237	246	274	232	233	-2%
Curfew	72	72	78	61	75	66	64	-18%
Accredited program	69	51	49	64	57	64	50	*
Specified activity	48	49	64	67	78	56	57	-11%
Drug treatment	37	16	21	20	26	11	26	*
Alcohol treatment	40	32	31	33	35	33	18	*
Mental health	3	8	5	3	2	8	7	*
Exclusion	3	7	5	1	3	3	9	*
Residential	5	5	5	2	16	7	5	*
Attendance centre	4	7	5	2	2	2	3	*
Prohibited activity	9	6	4	2	6	4	1	*
percentage of total requirements								
Unpaid work	27%	27%	25%	24%	25%	24%	24%	
Supervision	37%	35%	35%	37%	36%	36%	38%	
Other requirements	35%	37%	40%	39%	39%	40%	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								
	Q2 2010	Q2 2011	Q2 2012	Q3 2012	Q4 2012	Q1 2013	Q2 2013	% change, Q2 2012 to Q2 2013
number of requirements								
Community order	545	446	300	323	368	270	271	-10%
0-80 hours	211	190	124	139	144	108	95	-23%
81-150 hours	217	164	116	128	165	112	109	-6%
151-199 hours	37	28	17	21	21	12	21	*
200-250 hours	75	62	42	34	36	34	43	*
251-300 hours	5	2	1	1	2	4	3	*
percentage of total requirements								
0-80 hours	39%	43%	41%	43%	39%	40%	35%	
81-150 hours	40%	37%	39%	40%	45%	41%	40%	
151-199 hours	7%	6%	6%	7%	6%	4%	8%	
200-250 hours	14%	14%	14%	11%	10%	13%	16%	
251-300 hours	1%	0%	0%	0%	1%	1%	1%	
number of requirements								
Suspended sentence order	238	205	181	167	206	169	148	-18%
0-80 hours	60	51	64	36	51	43	25	*
81-150 hours	113	95	83	93	106	86	82	-1%
151-199 hours	12	17	14	10	8	14	10	*
200-250 hours	46	40	18	26	38	25	29	*
251-300 hours	7	2	2	2	3	1	2	*
percentage of total requirements								
0-80 hours	25%	25%	35%	22%	25%	25%	17%	
81-150 hours	47%	46%	46%	56%	51%	51%	55%	
151-199 hours	5%	8%	8%	6%	4%	8%	7%	
200-250 hours	19%	20%	10%	16%	18%	15%	20%	
251-300 hours	3%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	

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 5 in this Bulletin are drawn from an extract of data held on the Police National Computer (PNC) as at 2 August 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 5

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-march-2013/stb-crime--period-ending-march-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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Alternative formats are available on request from
statistics.enquiries@justice.gsi.gov.uk