

Knife Possession Sentencing Quarterly Brief January to March 2010 England and Wales

Ministry of Justice
Statistics Bulletin

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Knife Possession Sentencing Statistics January to March 2010

Introduction

Since May 2008 tougher sentences have been introduced for offences involving the possession of a knife. This was in response to the high prevalence of knife crime including possession of a knife.

This bulletin contains 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. It has been prepared from readily available management information to monitor trends.

The information presented generally 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) – see explanatory notes for fuller explanation. A breakdown for the separate offences is given for disposals in Table 3 but is not available for probation and prison data. The sources of data used do not enable us separately to identify other offences involving a knife, such as wounding offences. Full details on data quality and definitions are given in the notes at the end of the text.

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

Sentencing

- On 21 May 2008, the Court of Appeal issued the judgment in *Povey* that said that, 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, for the time being, the starting point for the lowest level of knife possession should be 12 weeks' custody. This applies to adults (aged 18 and over).
- 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.

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- Since September 2008 all probation areas are 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.

All statistics quoted in this quarterly brief are provisional and subject to change.

To enable a fuller comparison over time the tables in this bulletin with data from Q4 2007 onwards, are available for download from the Ministry of Justice website www.justice.gov.uk/publications/knife-crime-sentencing.htm

This publication has been prepared by Justice Statistics Analytical Services.

Key points – Q1 2010

Note on all comparisons

Comparisons are presented between the latest quarter (Q1 2010) and Q1 2009 to provide an indication of changes over the last year. Longer term comparisons comparing Q1 2010 with the same period two years ago are also shown to reflect the sizeable changes that occurred between Q1 2008 and Q3 2008, following the change in sentencing guidelines.

Cautioning and sentencing statistics (Tables 1 to 5)

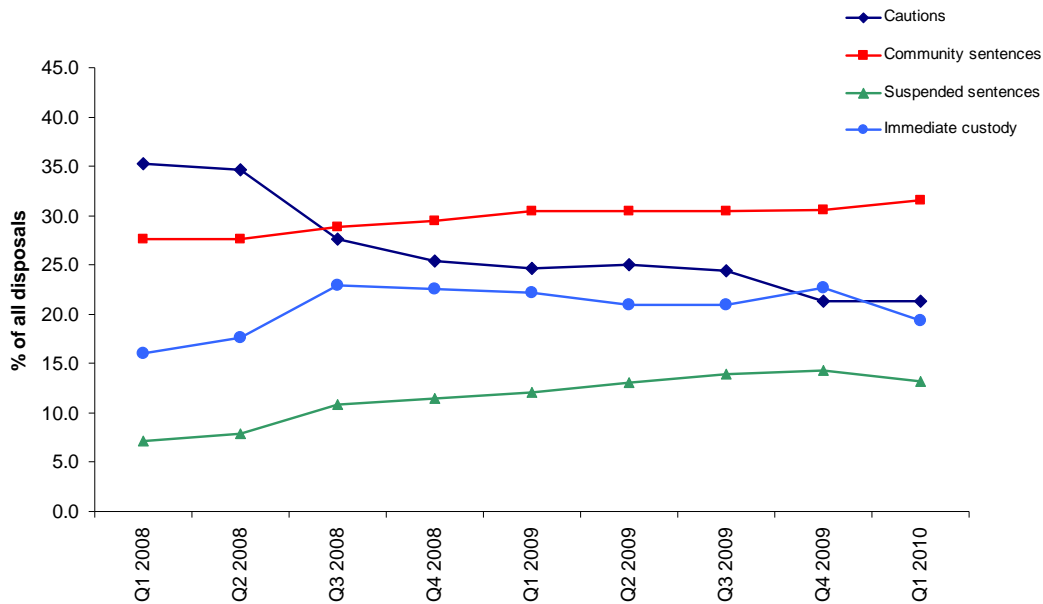
Q1 2010 compared to Q1 2009

- **Between Q1 2009 and Q1 2010 the total number of disposals given for knife or offensive weapon possession has decreased by 22% from 6,800 to 5,300.** This drop was more marked for juvenile offenders where the decrease was 30% (1,400 to 1,000), than for adult offenders where the decrease was 20% (5,400 to 4,300).
- **The proportion of offences receiving cautions¹ and immediate custodial sentences for knife or offensive weapon possession decreased slightly while the proportion of suspended sentences and community sentences remained broadly stable between Q1 2009 and Q1 2010²:**
 - In Q1 2010 21 per cent (1,100) of all possession offences resulted in a caution in England and Wales. This compares with 25 per cent (1,700) in Q1 2009.
 - In Q1 2010 19 per cent (1,000) of all possession offences resulted in immediate custody compared to 22 per cent (1,500) in Q1 2009.
 - In Q1 2010 13 per cent (700) of all possession offences resulted in suspended sentence orders compared to 12 per cent (820) in Q1 2009.
 - In Q1 2010 32 per cent (1,700) of all possession offences resulted in community sentences compared to 30 per cent (2,100) in Q1 2009.

¹ Cautions include juveniles receiving reprimands and final warnings.

² Immediate custody, suspended sentence and community sentence figures are likely to be revised upwards in later editions of the bulletin as final decisions regarding deferred sentences are recorded by the police. Other disposals include 'deferred sentences' and this means that the figures for this category will be higher for the latest quarter

Figure 1: Disposals for knife and offensive weapon possession for England and Wales



- **Where immediate custodial sentences are given for these offences there has been an increase in the proportion of longer sentences:**

 - In Q1 2010 36 per cent (370) of sentences were recorded as being over six months compared to 27 per cent (410) in Q1 2009.
 - The average length of a custodial sentence was 219 days in Q1 2010. This has increased from 180 days in Q1 2009.
- **For offences committed by juvenile offenders the proportion of offences receiving reprimands and final warnings decreased** from 37 per cent (520) in Q1 2009 to 30 per cent (300) in Q1 2010. This was balanced by an increase in the proportion receiving community sentences from 50 per cent (710) to 57 per cent (560).
- **For offences committed by adult offenders the proportion of offences receiving cautions decreased slightly** from 21 per cent (1,100) in Q1 2009 to 19 per cent (800) in Q1 2010 as did the proportion receiving immediate custodial sentences (26 per cent (1,400) to 22 per cent (960)) The proportion of suspended sentence orders and community sentences remained broadly stable.

Q1 2010 compared to Q1 2008

- **The total number of disposals (cautions and sentences) given for knife or offensive weapon possession has decreased by 26% between Q1 2008 and Q1 2010 (7,200 to 5,300).** This drop was more marked for juvenile offenders where the decrease was 39% (1,600 to 1,000), than for adult offenders where the decrease was 23% (5,500 to 4,300).
- **The proportion of offences receiving cautions³ for knife or offensive weapon possession decreased while the proportion of immediate custodial sentences, suspended sentence orders and community sentences rose between Q1 2008 and Q1 2010. This is a reflection of the sizeable changes that occurred between Q1 2008 and Q3 2008:**
 - In Q1 2010 21 per cent (1,100) of all possession offences resulted in a caution in England and Wales. This compares with 35 per cent (2,500) in Q1 2008.
 - In Q1 2010 19 per cent (1,000) of all possession offences resulted in immediate custody compared to 16 per cent (1,200) in Q1 2008.
 - In Q1 2010 13 per cent (700) of all possession offences resulted in suspended sentence orders compared to 7 per cent (510) in Q1 2008.
 - In Q1 2010 32 per cent (1,700) of all possession offences resulted in community sentences compared to 28 per cent (2,000) in Q1 2008.
- **Where immediate custodial sentences are given for these offences there has been an increase in the proportion of longer sentences:**
 - In Q1 2010 36 per cent (370) of sentences were recorded as being over six months compared to 15 per cent (170) in Q1 2008.
 - The average length of a custodial sentence was 219 days in Q1 2010. This has increased from 139 days in Q1 2008.
- **For offences committed by juvenile offenders the proportion of offences receiving reprimands and final warnings decreased** from 47 per cent (760) in Q1 2008 to 30 per cent (300) in Q1 2010. This was balanced by an increase in the proportion receiving community sentences (from 42 per cent (690) to 57 per cent (560)).

³ Cautions include juveniles receiving reprimands and final warnings.

- **For offences committed by adult offenders the proportion of offences receiving cautions decreased** from 32 per cent (1,800) in Q1 2008 to 19 per cent (800) in Q1 2010. This was accompanied by an increase in the proportion of suspended sentence orders (9 per cent (510) to 16 per cent (700)), community sentences (23 per cent (1,300) to 26 per cent (1,100)) and immediate custodial sentences (19 per cent (1,100) to 22 per cent (960)) given.

Probation supervision statistics (Tables 6, 7 and 8; these figures mainly cover offenders aged 18 or over)

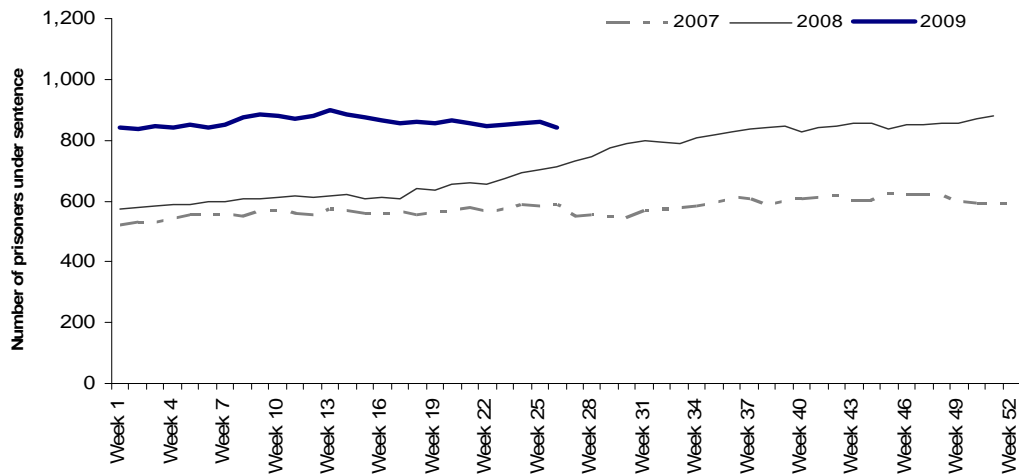
Q1 2010 compared to Q1 2009 and Q1 2008

- **In Q1 2010 there were 1,400 court order starts under probation supervision** for possession of an offensive weapon, this represents a decrease of 17 per cent from Q1 2009 (1,700), but an increase of 4 per cent from Q1 2008 (1,400). The increase was driven by the increase in SSOs, which rose from 340 to 470 (36 per cent increase) over the period.
- **There were changes in the proportion of those given unpaid work for suspended sentence orders** as a percentage of all requirements started. 27 per cent were given unpaid work in Q1 2010 compared to 26 per cent in Q1 2009 and 22 per cent in Q1 2008. The proportion of community orders given unpaid work remained stable at 37 per cent.
- **Where unpaid work requirements were started for these offences, there has been an increase in the proportion of longer requirements since Q1 2008, although the latest quarter shows a decrease compared to the same quarter the previous year:**
 - For community orders, in Q1 2010, 13 per cent of unpaid work requirements were recorded as being 200 hours or longer compared to 20 per cent in Q1 2009 and 8 per cent in Q1 2008.
 - For suspended sentence orders, in Q1 2010 17 per cent of unpaid work requirements were recorded as being 200 hours or longer compared to 22 per cent in Q1 2009 and 11 per cent in Q1 2008.

Prison population⁴

- Weekly prison population data shows on average, there was a 32 per cent increase (about 210) in the number of prisoners serving a sentence for possession of an offensive weapon between Q2 2008 and Q2 2009.

Figure 2: Prison population under sentence for possession of an offensive weapon⁵ (excludes breaches and recalls)



⁴ There is no updated prison population data beyond the end of June because data collection issues have emerged since the roll-out of a new case management system for prisons (Prison-NOMIS). Data for April to June 2010 should be available in the next bulletin

⁵ Includes having an article with a blade or a point

Appendix A: Statistical Tables

Table 1 (Part 1) : Offences involving the possession of a knife or offensive weapon resulting in a caution or sentence, England and Wales and non-TKAP police forces

| Disposal Category | Q1 2008 | Q1 2009 | Q2 2009 | Q3 2009 | Q4 2009 | Q1 2010 | Percentage change Q1 2009 to Q1 2010 | Percentage change Q1 2008 to Q1 2010 |
|---|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| England and Wales¹ | 7,161 | 6,772 | 6,346 | 6,453 | 5,653 | 5,272 | -22 | -26 |
| Caution ² | 2,526 | 1,667 | 1,589 | 1,574 | 1,204 | 1,124 | -33 | -56 |
| Absolute/Conditional discharge | 461 | 256 | 236 | 238 | 197 | 193 | -25 | -58 |
| Fine | 328 | 267 | 228 | 224 | 206 | 214 | -20 | -35 |
| Community sentence | 1,980 | 2,064 | 1,934 | 1,963 | 1,730 | 1,663 | -19 | -16 |
| Suspended sentence | 513 | 820 | 830 | 898 | 809 | 695 | -15 | 35 |
| Immediate custody | 1,152 | 1,499 | 1,330 | 1,355 | 1,282 | 1,023 | -32 | -11 |
| Other disposal ³ | 201 | 199 | 199 | 201 | 225 | 360 | 81 | 79 |
| Caution ² | 35 | 25 | 25 | 24 | 21 | 21 | | |
| Community sentence | 28 | 30 | 30 | 30 | 31 | 32 | | |
| Suspended sentence | 7 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 14 | 13 | | |
| Immediate custody | 16 | 22 | 21 | 21 | 23 | 19 | | |
| Non-TKAP police forces⁴ | 2,416 | 2,344 | 2,211 | 2,227 | 1,977 | 1,741 | -26 | -28 |
| Caution ² | 898 | 614 | 605 | 557 | 486 | 422 | -31 | -53 |
| Absolute/Conditional discharge | 184 | 89 | 84 | 103 | 83 | 78 | -12 | -58 |
| Fine | 98 | 94 | 87 | 77 | 73 | 87 | -7 | -11 |
| Community sentence | 588 | 682 | 606 | 622 | 549 | 470 | -31 | -20 |
| Suspended sentence | 166 | 261 | 265 | 304 | 251 | 226 | -13 | 36 |
| Immediate custody | 405 | 516 | 477 | 506 | 461 | 338 | -34 | -17 |
| Other disposal ³ | 77 | 88 | 87 | 58 | 74 | 120 | 36 | 56 |
| Caution ² | 37 | 26 | 27 | 25 | 25 | 24 | | |
| Community sentence | 24 | 29 | 27 | 28 | 28 | 27 | | |
| Suspended sentence | 7 | 11 | 12 | 14 | 13 | 13 | | |
| Immediate custody | 17 | 22 | 22 | 23 | 23 | 19 | | |

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

2. Cautions include juveniles receiving reprimands and final warnings

3. Other disposals include 'deferred sentences' and this means that the figures for this category will be higher for the latest quarter. Immediate custody, suspended sentence and community sentence figures are likely to be revised upwards in later editions

4. Non-TKAP police forces refers to those that have never been part of TKAP, Phase I or Phase II

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 is recorded by the police.

Knife Possession Sentencing quarterly brief, January to March 2010, England and Wales

Table 1 (Part 2): Offences involving the possession of a knife or offensive weapon resulting in a caution or sentence, TKAP police forces

| Disposal Category | Q1 2008 | Q1 2009 | Q2 2009 | Q3 2009 | Q4 2009 | Q1 2010 | Percentage change Q1 2009 to Q1 2010 | Percentage change Q1 2008 to Q1 2010 |
|--|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| TKAP Phase II - 16 forces¹ | 4,745 | 4,428 | 4,135 | 4,226 | 3,676 | 3,531 | -20 | -26 |
| Caution ² | 1,628 | 1,053 | 984 | 1,017 | 718 | 702 | -33 | -57 |
| Absolute/Conditional discharge | 277 | 167 | 152 | 135 | 114 | 115 | -31 | -58 |
| Fine | 230 | 173 | 141 | 147 | 133 | 127 | -27 | -45 |
| Community sentence | 1,392 | 1,382 | 1,328 | 1,341 | 1,181 | 1,193 | -14 | -14 |
| Suspended sentence | 347 | 559 | 565 | 594 | 558 | 469 | -16 | 35 |
| Immediate custody | 747 | 983 | 853 | 849 | 821 | 685 | -30 | -8 |
| Other disposal ³ | 124 | 111 | 112 | 143 | 151 | 240 | 116 | 94 |
| Caution ² | 34 | 24 | 24 | 24 | 20 | 20 | | |
| Community sentence | 29 | 31 | 32 | 32 | 32 | 34 | | |
| Suspended sentence | 7 | 13 | 14 | 14 | 15 | 13 | | |
| Immediate custody | 16 | 22 | 21 | 20 | 22 | 19 | | |
| TKAP Phase I - 10 forces⁴ | 3,634 | 3,414 | 3,195 | 3,249 | 2,841 | 2,744 | -20 | -24 |
| Caution ² | 1,210 | 779 | 735 | 733 | 536 | 513 | -34 | -58 |
| Absolute/Conditional discharge | 189 | 125 | 116 | 111 | 91 | 87 | -30 | -54 |
| Fine | 179 | 125 | 99 | 114 | 103 | 91 | -27 | -49 |
| Community sentence | 1,088 | 1,064 | 1,043 | 1,054 | 905 | 945 | -11 | -13 |
| Suspended sentence | 284 | 441 | 458 | 471 | 439 | 370 | -16 | 30 |
| Immediate custody | 597 | 803 | 653 | 655 | 648 | 547 | -32 | -8 |
| Other disposal ³ | 87 | 77 | 91 | 111 | 119 | 191 | 148 | 120 |
| Caution ² | 33 | 23 | 23 | 23 | 19 | 19 | | |
| Community sentence | 30 | 31 | 33 | 32 | 32 | 34 | | |
| Suspended sentence | 8 | 13 | 14 | 14 | 15 | 13 | | |
| Immediate custody | 16 | 24 | 20 | 20 | 23 | 20 | | |
| TKAP Phase II - 6 forces⁵ | 1,111 | 1,014 | 940 | 977 | 835 | 787 | -22 | -29 |
| Caution ² | 418 | 274 | 249 | 284 | 182 | 189 | -31 | -55 |
| Absolute/Conditional discharge | 88 | 42 | 36 | 24 | 23 | 28 | * | * |
| Fine | 51 | 48 | 42 | 33 | 30 | 36 | * | * |
| Community sentence | 304 | 318 | 285 | 287 | 276 | 248 | -22 | -18 |
| Suspended sentence | 63 | 118 | 107 | 123 | 119 | 99 | -16 | 57 |
| Immediate custody | 150 | 180 | 200 | 194 | 173 | 138 | -23 | -8 |
| Other disposal ³ | 37 | 34 | 21 | 32 | 32 | 49 | * | * |
| Caution ² | 38 | 27 | 26 | 29 | 22 | 24 | | |
| Community sentence | 27 | 31 | 30 | 29 | 33 | 32 | | |
| Suspended sentence | 6 | 12 | 11 | 13 | 14 | 13 | | |
| Immediate custody | 14 | 18 | 21 | 20 | 21 | 18 | | |

1. The Tackling Knives Action Programme police forces (Phase 2) are: Bedfordshire, the British Transport Police, Essex, Hampshire, Kent, Lancashire, Manchester, Merseyside, The Metropolitan Police, Northumbria, Nottinghamshire, South Wales, South Yorkshire

2. Cautions include juveniles receiving reprimands and final warnings

3. Other disposals include 'deferred sentences' and this means that the figures for this category will be higher for the latest quarter. Immediate custody, suspended sentence and community sentence figures are likely to be revised upwards in later editions

4. The Tackling Knives Action Programme police forces (Phase 1, Tier 1) were: Essex, Lancashire, Manchester, Merseyside, Metropolitan Police, Nottinghamshire, South Wales, Thames Valley, West Midlands and West Yorkshire - see explanatory notes for more details

5. The Tackling Knives Action Programme six new police forces introduced in April 2009 (Phase II) were: Bedfordshire, the British Transport Police, Hampshire, Kent, South Yorkshire and Northumbria - see explanatory notes for more 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 is recorded by the police.

Knife Possession Sentencing quarterly brief, January to March 2010, England and Wales

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

| Disposal Category | Q1 2008 | Q1 2009 | Q2 2009 | Q3 2009 | Q4 2009 | Q1 2010 | Percentage change Q1 2009 to Q1 2010 | Percentage change Q1 2008 to Q1 2010 |
|--------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Aged 10 to 17 | 1,631 | 1,416 | 1,338 | 1,237 | 1,011 | 991 | -30 | -39 |
| Reprimands & final warnings | 760 | 523 | 478 | 393 | 307 | 296 | -43 | -61 |
| Absolute/conditional discharge | 40 | 23 | 28 | 28 | 23 | 16 | * | * |
| Fine | 15 | 9 | 4 | 5 | 3 | 2 | * | * |
| Community sentence | 686 | 705 | 679 | 655 | 561 | 562 | -20 | -18 |
| Immediate custody | 96 | 120 | 112 | 112 | 77 | 62 | -48 | -35 |
| Other disposal ¹ | 34 | 36 | 37 | 44 | 40 | 53 | * | * |
| Reprimands & final warnings | 47 | 37 | 36 | 32 | 30 | 30 | | |
| Community sentence | 42 | 50 | 51 | 53 | 55 | 57 | | |
| Immediate custody | 6 | 8 | 8 | 9 | 8 | 6 | | |
| Aged 18 and over | 5,530 | 5,353 | 5,003 | 5,216 | 4,642 | 4,281 | -20 | -23 |
| Caution | 1,766 | 1,143 | 1,110 | 1,181 | 897 | 828 | -28 | -53 |
| Absolute/Conditional discharge | 421 | 233 | 207 | 210 | 174 | 177 | -24 | -58 |
| Fine | 313 | 258 | 224 | 219 | 203 | 212 | -18 | -32 |
| Community sentence | 1,294 | 1,359 | 1,255 | 1,308 | 1,169 | 1,101 | -19 | -15 |
| Suspended sentence | 511 | 814 | 829 | 893 | 809 | 695 | -15 | 36 |
| Immediate custody | 1,056 | 1,379 | 1,215 | 1,243 | 1,205 | 961 | -30 | -9 |
| Other disposal ¹ | 169 | 167 | 163 | 162 | 185 | 307 | 84 | 82 |
| Caution | 32 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 19 | 19 | | |
| Community sentence | 23 | 25 | 25 | 25 | 25 | 26 | | |
| Suspended sentence | 9 | 15 | 17 | 17 | 17 | 16 | | |
| Immediate custody | 19 | 26 | 24 | 24 | 26 | 22 | | |

1. Other disposals include 'deferred sentences' and this means that the figures for this category will be higher for the latest quarter. Immediate custody, suspended sentence and community sentence figures are likely to be revised upwards in later editions of the bulletin as final decisions regarding deferred sentences are recorded by the police.

*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

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Table 3: Offences involving the possession of a knife or offensive weapon resulting in a caution or sentence by offence code

| Disposal Category | Q1 2008 | Q1 2009 | Q2 2009 | Q3 2009 | Q4 2009 | Q1 2010 | Percentage change Q1 2009 to Q1 2010 | Percentage change Q1 2008 to Q1 2010 |
|---|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Possession of an article with a blade or point | | | | | | | | |
| | 3,404 | 3,533 | 3,155 | 3,338 | 2,877 | 2,695 | -24 | -21 |
| Caution ¹ | 937 | 524 | 482 | 474 | 397 | 402 | -23 | -57 |
| Absolute/Conditional discharge | 259 | 158 | 141 | 139 | 122 | 134 | -15 | -48 |
| Fine | 163 | 142 | 112 | 108 | 98 | 115 | -19 | -29 |
| Community sentence | 1,017 | 1,222 | 1,068 | 1,150 | 975 | 941 | -23 | -7 |
| Suspended sentence | 263 | 502 | 471 | 541 | 455 | 367 | -27 | 40 |
| Immediate custody | 650 | 874 | 757 | 805 | 724 | 562 | -36 | -14 |
| Other disposal ² | 115 | 111 | 124 | 121 | 106 | 174 | 57 | 51 |
| Caution ¹ | 28 | 15 | 15 | 14 | 14 | 15 | | |
| Community sentence | 30 | 35 | 34 | 34 | 34 | 35 | | |
| Suspended sentence | 8 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 16 | 14 | | |
| Immediate custody | 19 | 25 | 24 | 24 | 25 | 21 | | |
| Possession of an offensive weapon | | | | | | | | |
| | 3,757 | 3,239 | 3,191 | 3,115 | 2,776 | 2,577 | -20 | -31 |
| Caution ¹ | 1,589 | 1,143 | 1,107 | 1,100 | 807 | 722 | -37 | -55 |
| Absolute/Conditional discharge | 202 | 98 | 95 | 99 | 75 | 59 | -40 | -71 |
| Fine | 165 | 125 | 116 | 116 | 108 | 99 | -21 | -40 |
| Community sentence | 963 | 842 | 866 | 813 | 755 | 722 | -14 | -25 |
| Suspended sentence | 250 | 318 | 359 | 357 | 354 | 328 | 3 | 31 |
| Immediate custody | 502 | 625 | 573 | 550 | 558 | 461 | -26 | -8 |
| Other disposal ² | 86 | 88 | 75 | 80 | 119 | 186 | 111 | 116 |
| Caution ¹ | 42 | 35 | 35 | 35 | 29 | 28 | | |
| Community sentence | 26 | 26 | 27 | 26 | 27 | 28 | | |
| Suspended sentence | 7 | 10 | 11 | 11 | 13 | 13 | | |
| Immediate custody | 13 | 19 | 18 | 18 | 20 | 18 | | |

1. Cautions include juveniles receiving reprimands and final warnings

2. Other disposals include 'deferred sentences' and this means that the figures for this category will be higher for the latest quarter. Immediate custody, suspended sentence and community sentence figures are likely to be revised upwards in later editions of the bulletin as final decisions regarding deferred sentences are recorded by the police.

Data Source and Quality

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Table 4: Custodial sentences for knife and offensive weapon possession offences, by sentence length

| Sentence length | Q1 2008 | Q1 2009 | Q2 2009 | Q3 2009 | Q4 2009 | Q1 2010 | Percentage change Q1 2009 to Q1 2010 | Percentage change Q1 2008 to Q1 2010 |
|--|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| England and Wales¹ | 1,152 | 1,499 | 1,330 | 1,355 | 1,282 | 1,023 | -32 | -11 |
| Up to and including 3 months | 587 | 634 | 532 | 550 | 456 | 336 | -47 | -43 |
| Over 3 months and up to and including 6 months | 389 | 454 | 402 | 373 | 408 | 321 | -29 | -17 |
| Over 6 months | 168 | 409 | 394 | 428 | 414 | 365 | -11 | 117 |
| Up to and including 3 months | 51 | 42 | 40 | 41 | 36 | 33 | | |
| Over 3 months and up to and including 6 months | 34 | 30 | 30 | 28 | 32 | 31 | | |
| Over 6 months | 15 | 27 | 30 | 32 | 32 | 36 | | |

1. Total figures include offences where sentence length was not recorded by the police

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 is recorded by the police.

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

| | Q1 2008 | Q1 2009 | Q2 2009 | Q3 2009 | Q4 2009 | Q1 2010 | Percentage change Q1 2009 to Q1 2010 | Percentage change Q1 2008 to Q1 2010 |
|--|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Average sentence length (days) | | | | | | | | |
| England and Wales¹ | 139 | 180 | 189 | 191 | 203 | 219 | 21 | 58 |
| TKAP Phase II - 16 forces² | 143 | 185 | 180 | 190 | 200 | 213 | 15 | 49 |
| Phase I - 10 forces ³ | 144 | 189 | 181 | 195 | 197 | 210 | 11 | 45 |
| Phase II - 6 forces ⁴ | 137 | 167 | 176 | 172 | 211 | 228 | 37 | 67 |
| Other police forces⁵ | 132 | 172 | 204 | 192 | 208 | 230 | 34 | 75 |

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

2. The Tackling Knives Action Programme police forces (Phase 2) are: Bedfordshire, the British Transport Police, Essex, Hampshire, Kent, Lancashire, Manchester, Merseyside, The Metropolitan Police, Northumbria, Nottinghamshire, South Wales, South Yorkshire

3. The Tackling Knives Action Programme police forces (Phase 1, Tier 1) were: Essex, Lancashire, Manchester, Merseyside, Metropolitan Police, Nottinghamshire, South Wales, Thames Valley, West Midlands and West Yorkshire - see explanatory notes for more details

4. The Tackling Knives Action Programme six new police forces introduced in April 2009 (Phase II) were: Bedfordshire, the British Transport Police, Hampshire, Kent, South Yorkshire and Northumbria - see explanatory notes for more details

5. Other police forces refers to those that have never been part of TKAP, Phase I or Phase II

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 is recorded by the police.

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Table 6: Court order starts for possession of an offensive weapon¹

| Court Order starts | Q1 2008 | Q1 2009 | Q2 2009 | Q3 2009 | Q4 2009 | Q1 2010 | Percentage change Q1 2009 to Q1 2010 | Percentage change Q1 2008 to Q1 2010 |
|--------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Total | 1,381 | 1,728 | 1,622 | 1,611 | 1,500 | 1,438 | -17 | 4 |
| Community order | 992 | 1,132 | 1,059 | 1,024 | 924 | 947 | -16 | -5 |
| SSO | 342 | 551 | 524 | 536 | 540 | 465 | -16 | 36 |
| Pre CJA orders | 47 | 45 | 39 | 51 | 36 | 26 | * | * |
| Community order | 72 | 66 | 65 | 64 | 62 | 66 | | |
| SSO | 25 | 32 | 32 | 33 | 36 | 32 | | |
| Pre CJA orders | 3 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 2 | | |

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 Sources 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.

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Table 7: Requirement starts for possession of offensive weapon¹

| | Q1 2008 | Q1 2009 | Q2 2009 | Q3 2009 | Q4 2009 | Q1 2010 | Percentage change Q1 2009 to Q1 2010 | Percentage change Q1 2008 to Q1 2010 |
|---------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Community Order | 1,579 | 1,836 | 1,653 | 1,585 | 1,474 | 1,507 | -18 | -5 |
| Unpaid Work | 589 | 646 | 616 | 560 | 535 | 554 | -14 | -6 |
| Supervision | 531 | 612 | 570 | 547 | 466 | 491 | -20 | -8 |
| Accredited Program | 141 | 151 | 112 | 119 | 101 | 101 | -33 | -28 |
| Curfew | 125 | 168 | 154 | 129 | 147 | 131 | -22 | 5 |
| Drug treatment | 55 | 67 | 50 | 60 | 52 | 52 | -22 | -5 |
| Specified Activity | 73 | 93 | 70 | 77 | 68 | 84 | -10 | 15 |
| Alcohol treatment | 24 | 47 | 43 | 53 | 54 | 48 | * | * |
| Mental Health | 19 | 27 | 17 | 18 | 25 | 19 | * | * |
| Exclusion | 4 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 7 | * | * |
| Residential | 5 | 5 | 8 | 6 | 6 | 7 | * | * |
| Attendance Centre | 7 | 10 | 5 | 8 | 8 | 7 | * | * |
| Prohibited Activity | 6 | 6 | 5 | 6 | 8 | 6 | * | * |
| Unpaid work | 37 | 35 | 37 | 35 | 36 | 37 | | |
| Supervision | 34 | 33 | 34 | 35 | 32 | 33 | | |
| Other requirements | 29 | 31 | 28 | 30 | 32 | 31 | | |
| Suspended Sentence Order | 635 | 972 | 934 | 963 | 978 | 822 | -15 | 29 |
| Supervision | 255 | 374 | 348 | 350 | 373 | 316 | -16 | 24 |
| Unpaid Work | 142 | 256 | 259 | 284 | 254 | 223 | -13 | 57 |
| Accredited Program | 100 | 125 | 127 | 100 | 97 | 81 | -35 | -19 |
| Curfew | 54 | 90 | 79 | 96 | 101 | 74 | -18 | 37 |
| Drug treatment | 28 | 31 | 27 | 14 | 33 | 26 | * | * |
| Alcohol treatment | 21 | 34 | 32 | 38 | 43 | 35 | * | * |
| Specified Activity | 17 | 33 | 29 | 44 | 46 | 42 | * | * |
| Prohibited Activity | 3 | 9 | 10 | 4 | 15 | 5 | * | * |
| Exclusion | 2 | 6 | 2 | 8 | 3 | 8 | * | * |
| Mental Health | 2 | 4 | 10 | 8 | 3 | 6 | * | * |
| Residential | 10 | 6 | 9 | 13 | 7 | 6 | * | * |
| Attendance Centre | 1 | 4 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 0 | * | * |
| Unpaid work | 22 | 26 | 28 | 29 | 26 | 27 | | |
| Supervision | 40 | 38 | 37 | 36 | 38 | 38 | | |
| Other requirements | 37 | 35 | 35 | 34 | 36 | 34 | | |

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 Sources 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.

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Table 8: Unpaid work requirements started by length of requirement given for possession of offensive weapon¹

| | Q1 2008 | Q1 2009 | Q2 2009 | Q3 2009 | Q4 2009 | Q1 2010 | Percentage change Q1 2009 to Q1 2010 | Percentage change Q1 2008 to Q1 2010 |
|---------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Community Order | 622 | 679 | 663 | 616 | 591 | 612 | -10 | -2 |
| 0-80 hours | 300 | 241 | 238 | 216 | 224 | 225 | -7 | -25 |
| 81-150 hours | 246 | 257 | 252 | 258 | 221 | 274 | 7 | 11 |
| 151-199 hours | 24 | 47 | 43 | 36 | 42 | 32 | * | * |
| 200-250 hours | 51 | 113 | 110 | 92 | 98 | 74 | -35 | 45 |
| 251-300 hours | 1 | 21 | 20 | 14 | 6 | 7 | * | * |
| 0-80 hours | 48 | 35 | 36 | 35 | 38 | 37 | | |
| 81-150 hours | 40 | 38 | 38 | 42 | 37 | 45 | | |
| 151-199 hours | 4 | 7 | 6 | 6 | 7 | 5 | | |
| 200-250 hours | 8 | 17 | 17 | 15 | 17 | 12 | | |
| 251-300 hours | 0 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 1 | | |
| Suspended sentence order | 139 | 254 | 256 | 304 | 260 | 229 | -10 | 65 |
| 0-80 hours | 50 | 59 | 54 | 75 | 49 | 49 | * | * |
| 81-150 hours | 61 | 124 | 129 | 134 | 131 | 127 | 2 | 108 |
| 151-199 hours | 12 | 17 | 13 | 24 | 20 | 15 | * | * |
| 200-250 hours | 14 | 47 | 56 | 65 | 57 | 34 | * | * |
| 251-300 hours | 2 | 7 | 4 | 6 | 3 | 4 | * | * |
| 0-80 hours | 36 | 23 | 21 | 25 | 19 | 21 | | |
| 81-150 hours | 44 | 49 | 50 | 44 | 50 | 55 | | |
| 151-199 hours | 9 | 7 | 5 | 8 | 8 | 7 | | |
| 200-250 hours | 10 | 19 | 22 | 21 | 22 | 15 | | |
| 251-300 hours | 1 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | | |

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 Sources 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

All the data are drawn from administrative sources. Although care is taken when processing and analysing the data, the detail is subject to the inaccuracies inherent in any large-scale recording system. While the figures shown have been checked as far as practicable, they should be regarded as approximate and not necessarily accurate to the last whole number shown in the tables. They are fit to be used for purposes of looking at trends and for comparing the relative magnitude of components.

Unless otherwise stated, numbers in the text have been rounded for ease of reading using the following rules:

Numbers of 100,000 and over are rounded to the nearest 1,000

Numbers from 1,000 – 99,999 are rounded to the nearest 100

Numbers from 10 – 999 are rounded to the nearest 10

Numbers under 10 are unrounded.

Tables 1-5

The data presented in tables 1-5 in this Bulletin are drawn from an extract of data held by the Ministry of Justice taken from the Police National Computer (PNC).

The figures are provisional and subject to change as more information is recorded by the police. Police forces tend to record cautions more promptly on the PNC than court sentences, so that the cautions figures for the latest quarter shown in the tables will tend to be more complete than the sentencing figures. In addition, in some areas, the police may record a 'deferred sentence' which will be updated at a later date when the final outcome is known. 'Deferred sentences' appear in the tables as 'other disposals' and this means that the figures for this category will be higher for the latest quarter. Immediate custody, suspended sentence and community sentence figures are likely to be revised upwards in later editions of the bulletin as final decisions regarding deferred sentences are recorded by the police. Figures for all quarters and all sentences may be revised in later editions of this Bulletin.

Tables 6-8 and figure 3

The probation data have 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 42 probation areas 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 1-5 relate to the total number of *offences* committed by offenders given particular disposals, which will naturally be greater than the number of offenders. Also, the probation data only show 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).

There is no updated prison population data beyond the end of June because data collection issues have emerged since the roll-out of a new case management system for prisons (Prison-NOMIS). We are working to resolve these as soon as possible. Data for April to June 2010 should be available in the next bulletin.

Definitions

TKAP Phase 1, Tier 1 – The Tackling Knives Action Programme (TKAP) focused resources on rapid, intensive work in specific areas of the country to tackle knife crime primarily among teenagers. TKAP Phase 1 started in June 2008 and 10 areas were selected (known as Tier 1), these are Essex, Lancashire, Manchester, Merseyside, Metropolitan Police, Nottinghamshire, South Wales, Thames Valley, West Midlands and West Yorkshire. An additional four areas, Bedfordshire, Northumbria, South Yorkshire and the British Transport Police, were selected later in 2008 and these were known as TKAP Tier 2 areas. These areas were not included in the TKAP monitoring programme.

TKAP Phase 1 finished in March 2009 and a report which provides an overview of key findings can be found online on the Home Office research publication website at: www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs09/horr18c.pdf

TKAP Phase 2 - In April 2009, TKAP Phase 2 was launched and although there is still a focus on reducing the carrying of knives and knife related violence the primary aim is to reduce all serious youth violence, specifically among 13 to 24 years olds. The initiative was implemented in the TKAP Tier 1 and 2 areas with an additional two areas, Kent and Hampshire, making a total of 16 police force areas.

England and Wales – Total figures for England and Wales now include all police forces in England and Wales and the British Transport Police. 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

DWP, HMRC, MOD and BTP. Previously only the 43 police forces governed by the Home Office were reported on, but now, as the British Transport Police is part of TKAP, they are included in the total figures for England and Wales.

Offences included: The PNC data (tables 1-5) produced in this brief are the number of offences committed not 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).

Juvenile – A juvenile offender is aged between 10 and 17.

Adult – An adult offender is aged 18 and over.

Offensive weapon – there are three classes of offensive weapons. Those made for causing injury; those adapted for such a purpose; and those not so made or adapted, but carried with the intention of causing injury. These consist of all listed on the Criminal Justice Act 1988 (Offensive Weapons) Order 1988 as amended, some examples include: a swordstick, that is, a hollow walking-stick or cane containing a blade which may be used as a sword; the weapon sometimes known as a "belt buckle knife", being a buckle which incorporates or conceals a knife.

Caution – given by, or 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. For **adult** offenders, who must admit guilt and consent to a caution.

Reprimand and final warning – available for **juvenile** offenders. Reprimands can be given to first-time offenders for minor offences. Any further offending results in either a final warning or charge. The final warning triggers immediate referral to a local youth offending team. Reprimands and final warnings for juveniles are the equivalent of cautions for adults. Therefore in the tables reprimands and final warnings are counted under the 'cautions' disposal category.

Community sentence – for **adults** the main community sentence, which is supervised by the Probation Service, is the community order introduced by the Criminal Justice Act 2003 for offences committed on or after 4 April 2005. The court must add at least one (but could potentially add all 12) of the following requirements: 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. For **juveniles** the main community sentences used are the referral order, for first-time offenders who plead guilty on their first court appearance and do not merit a discharge or custodial sentence, and the supervision order (up to 3 years, may have additional requirements) although curfew orders, reparation orders, action plan orders and attendance centre orders are also available. Youth Offending Teams supervise orders for juveniles.

Suspended Sentence – available for **adults** only. It is a sentence of custody of under 12 months, suspended for a period ranging from six months to two years. During the suspension period the court sets a number of requirements, from the same options as are available for the community order, and these are supervised by the Probation Service.

Immediate custody – **adults** aged 21 or over may receive sentences of unsuspended imprisonment and those aged 18 to 20 may be sentenced to detention in a young offender institution. The maximum sentence available is 4 years for possession of a bladed article in a public place or an offensive weapon. **Juveniles** aged 12-17 may receive a detention and training order of 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 18 or 24 months. The order is served partly in custody (in local authority children's homes, secure training centres or prison service young offender institutions) and partly in the community under the supervision of a probation officer, social worker or member of a youth offending team.

Contact points for further information

Current and previous editions of this publication are available for download at www.justice.gov.uk/publications/knife-crime-sentencing.htm.

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