

Knife Possession Sentencing Quarterly Brief April to June 2012 England and Wales

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Knife Possession Sentencing Statistics April to June 2012

Introduction

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.

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). 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 other offences involving a knife, such as wounding offences, to be separately identified, and these offences are not included in the statistics. 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:

- On 21 May 2008, the Court of Appeal issued the judgment in *Povey*¹ 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 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.

¹ Povey & Ors, R. v, Court of Appeal - Criminal Division, May 21, 2008, [2008] EWCA Crim 1261.

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/statistics/criminal-justice/knife-possession/knife-possession-editions

This publication has been prepared by Justice Statistics Analytical Services.

Key points

Note on all comparisons

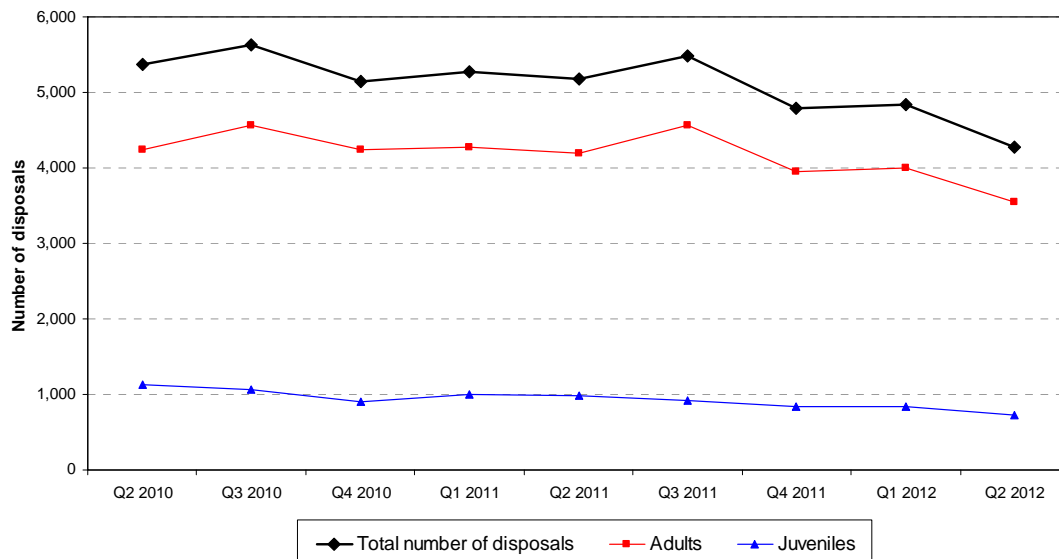
Comparisons are presented between the latest quarter (April to June, Q2 2012) and Q2 2011 to provide an indication of changes over the last year. Longer term comparisons comparing Q2 2012 with the same period two years ago are also shown.

Care should be taken when interpreting small changes in the statistics between quarterly periods. In particular, it should be noted that the latest figures presented for immediate custody are likely to be revised upwards in later editions of the bulletin as additional data regarding deferred sentences become available. Table 9, presented towards the end of this bulletin, gives an indication of the likely scale of these revisions.

Cautioning and sentencing statistics (Tables 1 to 5) for Q2 2012 and Q2 2011

- Between Q2 2011 and Q2 2012 the total number of disposals given for knife or offensive weapon possession has decreased by 18 per cent from 5,184 to 4,270.

Figure 1: Number of disposals given for knife and offensive weapon possession in England and Wales, by age, between Q2 2010 and Q2 2012

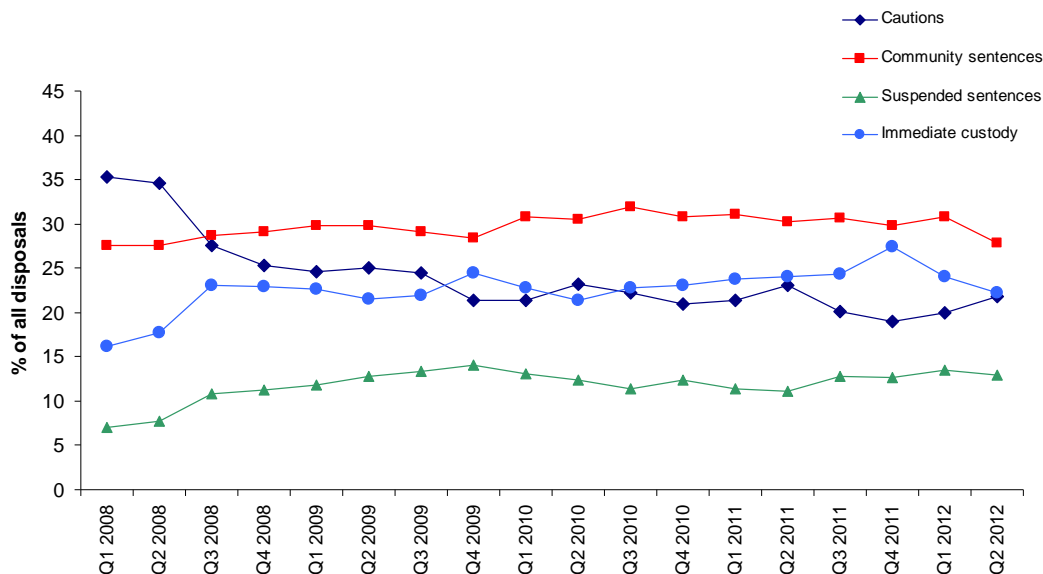


- The proportion of offences receiving cautions, community sentences and immediate custodial sentences for knife or offensive

weapon possession decreased, while the proportion of suspended sentence orders increased between Q2 2011 and Q2 2012²:

- In Q2 2012, 22 per cent (933) of all possession offences resulted in a caution³ in England and Wales; compared to 23 per cent (1,193) in Q2 2011.
- In Q2 2012, 28 per cent (1,190) of all possession offences resulted in community sentences; compared to 30 per cent (1,568) in Q2 2011.
- In Q2 2012, 13 per cent (555) of all possession offences resulted in suspended sentence orders; compared to 11 per cent (576) in Q2 2011.
- In Q2 2012, 22 per cent (951) of all possession offences resulted in immediate custody; compared to 24 per cent (1,248) in Q2 2011.

Figure 2: Proportion of type of disposal given for knife and offensive weapon possession in England and Wales, between Q1 2008 and Q2 2012



- **Where immediate custodial sentences are given for these offences the proportion receiving longer sentences has increased:**

- In Q2 2012, 37 per cent (356) of sentences were recorded as being over six months compared to 30 per cent (369) in Q2 2011.

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.

³ Cautions include juveniles receiving reprimands and warnings.

- The average length of a custodial sentence was 241 days (8.0 months) in Q2 2012, compared to 187 days (6.2 months) in Q2 2011.
- **For offences committed by juvenile offenders the proportion of offences receiving reprimands and warnings and community sentences has increased.** For reprimands and warnings, the increase has been from 30 per cent (291) to 31 per cent (223) and for community sentences the increase has been from 54 per cent (526) to 56 per cent (405). This was balanced by a decrease in the proportion receiving immediate custodial sentences from 11 per cent (112) to 7 per cent (51).
- **For offences committed by adult offenders the proportion of offences receiving a caution, community sentence or immediate custodial sentence has decreased.** For cautions, the decrease has been from 21 per cent (902) in Q2 2011 to 20 per cent (710) in Q2 2012, for community sentences from 25 per cent (1,041) to 22 per cent (784) and for immediate custodial sentences from 27 per cent (1,136) to 25 per cent (900). The proportion of suspended sentence orders has increased from 14 per cent (575) to 16 per cent (555).

Comparison between Q2 2012 and Q2 2010

- **The total number of disposals (cautions and sentences) given for knife or offensive weapon possession has decreased by 20 per cent between Q2 2010 and Q2 2012 (5,368 to 4,270).** This drop was higher for juvenile offenders where the decrease was 36 per cent (1,130 to 727), than for adult offenders where the decrease was 16 per cent (4,237 to 3,542).
- **The proportion of offences receiving cautions⁴ and community sentences for knife or offensive weapon possession decreased, while the proportion receiving an immediate custodial sentence and suspended sentence increased between Q2 2010 and Q2 2012:**
 - In Q2 2012, 22 per cent (933) of all possession offences resulted in a caution in England and Wales. This compares with 23 per cent (1,248) in Q2 2010.
 - In Q2 2012, 28 per cent (1,190) of all possession offences resulted in community sentences compared to 31 per cent (1,640) in Q2 2010.
 - In Q2 2012, 13 per cent (555) of all possession offences resulted in suspended sentence orders compared to 12 per cent (663) in Q2 2010.
 - In Q2 2012, 22 per cent (951) of all possession offences resulted in immediate custody; the figure in Q2 2010 was 21 per cent (1,151).
- **Where immediate custodial sentences are given for these offences there has been an increase in the proportion of longer sentences:**
 - In Q2 2012, 37 per cent (356) of sentences were recorded as being over six months compared to 31 per cent (352) in Q2 2010.
 - The average length of a custodial sentence was 241 days (8.0 months) in Q2 2012. This has increased from 189 days (6.3 months) in Q2 2010.
- **For offences committed by juvenile offenders the proportion of offences receiving community sentences rose from 53 per cent (595) to 56 per cent (405).** This was balanced by a decrease in the proportion receiving reprimands and warnings, from 32 per cent (362) to 31 per cent (223).
- **For offences committed by adult offenders the proportion of offences receiving cautions and community sentences decreased and immediate custodial sentences and suspended sentences remained stable.** The proportion of cautions decreased from 21 per cent

⁴ Cautions include juveniles receiving reprimands and warnings.

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(886) in Q2 2010 to 20 per cent (710) in Q2 2012. Community sentences decreased from 25 per cent (1,045) in Q2 2010 to 22 per cent (784) in Q2 2012.

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

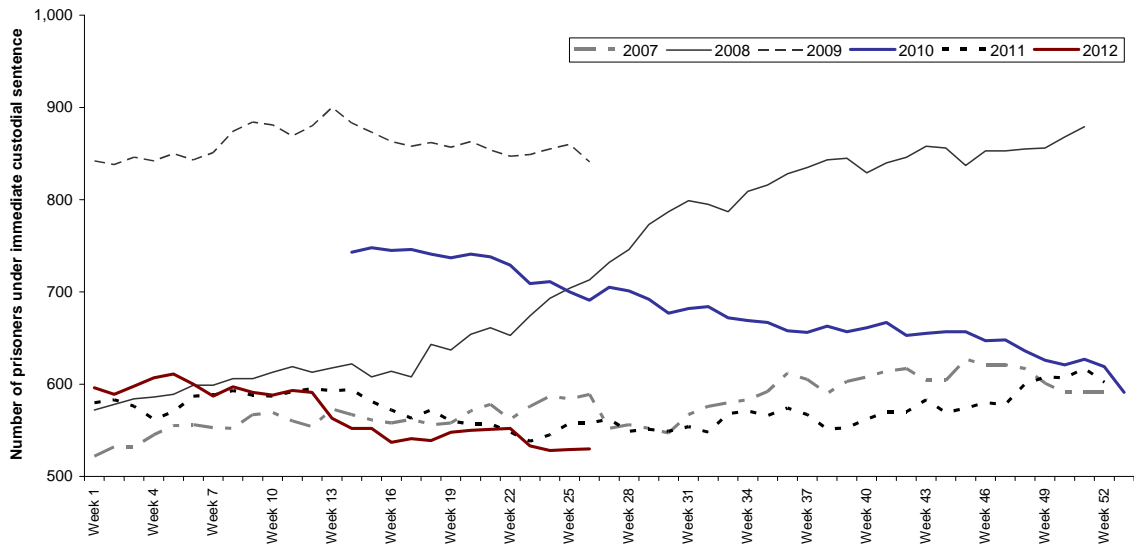
Q2 2012 compared to Q2 2011 and Q2 2010

- **In Q2 2012 there were 940 court order starts under probation supervision** for possession of an offensive weapon, this represents a decrease of 20 per cent (1,168) from Q2 2011; the decrease from Q2 2010 was 30 per cent (1,350). Community orders decreased by 28 per cent over the past year, whereas suspended sentence orders decreased by 2 per cent.
- **The proportion of those given unpaid work for community orders (30 per cent) as a percentage of all requirements has fallen over the past year (from 33 per cent). For suspended sentence orders this proportion also decreased from 27 to 25 per cent.**
- **Where unpaid work requirements were started under community orders, the proportion of longer requirements has remained stable over the past year. For suspended sentence orders there has been a sharp fall in the proportion of longer requirements and a sharp rise in the shorter requirements:**
 - For community orders, in Q2 2012, 14 per cent of unpaid work requirements were recorded as being 200 hours or longer, the same as in Q2 2011.
 - For suspended sentence orders, in Q2 2012, 11 per cent of unpaid work requirements were recorded as being 200 hours or longer, compared to 21 per cent in Q2 2011. In Q2 2012, 35 per cent of unpaid work requirements were recorded as being 80 hours or less, compared to 25 per cent in Q2 2011.

Prison population

- The population in prison serving a sentence for possession of an offensive weapon was 530 on 29 June 2012, down by 5 per cent from a year ago (558).

Figure 3: Prison population under sentence for possession of an offensive weapon⁵ (excludes recalls) in England and Wales, between 2007 and 2012



Due to technical problems relating to the supply of statistical information, it is not possible to provide figures from July 2009 to March 2010

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

Disposal category	Q2 2010	Q2 2011	Q3 2011	Q4 2011	Q1 2012	Q2 2012	Number of offences and percentages	
							Percentage change Q2 2011 to Q2 2012	Percentage change Q2 2010 to Q2 2012
number of offences								
England and Wales¹	5,368	5,184	5,480	4,795	4,837	4,270	-18%	-20%
Caution ²	1,248	1,193	1,099	910	966	933	-22%	-25%
Absolute/Conditional discharge	236	187	207	145	165	132	-29%	-44%
Fine	205	223	244	192	194	170	-24%	-17%
Community sentence	1,640	1,568	1,682	1,430	1,487	1,190	-24%	-27%
Suspended sentence	663	576	704	609	651	555	-4%	-16%
Immediate custody	1,151	1,248	1,335	1,313	1,165	951	-24%	-17%
Other disposal ³	225	189	209	196	209	339	79%	51%
percentage of total offences								
Caution ²	23%	23%	20%	19%	20%	22%		
Community sentence	31%	30%	31%	30%	31%	28%		
Suspended sentence	12%	11%	13%	13%	13%	13%		
Immediate custody	21%	24%	24%	27%	24%	22%		

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

² Cautions include juveniles receiving reprimands and 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 of the bulletin as final decisions regarding deferred sentences are 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 2: Offences involving the possession of a knife or offensive weapon resulting in a caution or sentence by age group

Disposal category	Q2 2010	Q2 2011	Q3 2011	Q4 2011	Q1 2012	Q2 2012	Number of offences and percentages	
							Percentage change Q2 2011 to Q2 2012	Percentage change Q2 2010 to Q2 2012
number of offences								
Aged 10 to 17	1,130	980	914	841	839	727	-26%	-36%
Reprimands & warnings	362	291	233	203	208	223	-23%	-38%
Absolute/conditional discharge	23	25	25	13	18	8	*	*
Fine	4	2	1	2	3	0	*	*
Community sentence	595	526	508	504	505	405	-23%	-32%
Immediate custody	99	112	109	93	80	51	-54%	-48%
Other disposal ²	47	24	38	26	25	40	*	*
percentage of total offences								
Reprimands & warnings	32%	30%	25%	24%	25%	31%		
Community sentence	53%	54%	56%	60%	60%	56%		
Immediate custody	9%	11%	12%	11%	10%	7%		
number of offences								
Aged 18 and over	4,237	4,201	4,565	3,952	3,998	3,542	-16%	-16%
Caution	886	902	866	706	758	710	-21%	-20%
Absolute/Conditional discharge	213	162	182	132	147	124	-23%	-42%
Fine	201	221	243	190	191	170	-23%	-15%
Community sentence	1,045	1,041	1,174	926	982	784	-25%	-25%
Suspended sentence	662	575	704	609	651	555	-3%	-16%
Immediate custody	1,052	1,136	1,225	1,220	1,085	900	-21%	-14%
Other disposal ¹	178	164	171	169	184	299	82%	68%
percentage of total offences								
Caution	21%	21%	19%	18%	19%	20%		
Community sentence	25%	25%	26%	23%	25%	22%		
Suspended sentence	16%	14%	15%	15%	16%	16%		
Immediate custody	25%	27%	27%	31%	27%	25%		

¹ The difference of 1 between the totals and the adult/juvenile breakdowns is for 1 person who has no age recorded. For Q2 2012 one person had a community penalty with no age recorded, likewise in Q2 2010 one person had a fully suspended sentence. In Q2 2011, there were no individuals with a missing age.

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.

*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.

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

Disposal category	Number of offences and percentages						Percentage change Q2 2011 to Q2 2012	Percentage change Q2 2010 to Q2 2012
	Q2 2010	Q2 2011	Q3 2011	Q4 2011	Q1 2012	Q2 2012		
number of offences								
Possession of an article with a blade or point	2,902	2,853	3,018	2,605	2,702	2,402	-16%	-17%
Caution ¹	473	481	408	331	399	399	-17%	-16%
Absolute/Conditional discharge	146	118	130	98	108	84	-29%	-42%
Fine	131	138	134	115	120	100	-28%	-24%
Community sentence	930	925	999	859	879	735	-21%	-21%
Suspended sentence	391	345	409	346	394	330	-4%	-16%
Immediate custody	693	734	819	739	690	567	-23%	-18%
Other disposal ²	138	112	119	117	112	187	67%	36%
percentage of total offences								
Caution ¹	16%	17%	14%	13%	15%	17%		
Community sentence	32%	32%	33%	33%	33%	31%		
Suspended sentence	13%	12%	14%	13%	15%	14%		
Immediate custody	24%	26%	27%	28%	26%	24%		
number of offences								
Possession of an offensive weapon	2,466	2,331	2,462	2,190	2,135	1,868	-20%	-24%
Caution ¹	775	712	691	579	567	534	-25%	-31%
Absolute/Conditional discharge	90	69	77	47	57	48	-30%	-47%
Fine	74	85	110	77	74	70	-18%	-5%
Community sentence	710	643	683	571	608	455	-29%	-36%
Suspended sentence	272	231	295	263	257	225	-3%	-17%
Immediate custody	458	514	516	574	475	384	-25%	-16%
Other disposal ²	87	77	90	79	97	152	97%	75%
percentage of total offences								
Caution ¹	31%	31%	28%	26%	27%	29%		
Community sentence	29%	28%	28%	26%	28%	24%		
Suspended sentence	11%	10%	12%	12%	12%	12%		
Immediate custody	19%	22%	21%	26%	22%	21%		

¹ Cautions include juveniles receiving reprimands and 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.

³ 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.

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

Sentence length	Number of offences and percentages						Percentage change Q2 2011 to Q2 2012	Percentage change Q2 2010 to Q2 2012
	Q2 2010	Q2 2011	Q3 2011	Q4 2011	Q1 2012	Q2 2012		
number of offences								
England and Wales^{1,2}	1,151	1,248	1,335	1,313	1,165	951	-24%	-17%
Up to and including 3 months	456	531	544	448	422	340	-36%	-25%
Over 3 months and up to and including 6 months	342	345	371	381	327	252	-27%	-26%
Over 6 months	352	369	418	484	415	356	-4%	1%
percentage of total offences								
Up to and including 3 months	40%	43%	41%	34%	36%	36%		
Over 3 months and up to and including 6 months	30%	28%	28%	29%	28%	26%		
Over 6 months	31%	30%	31%	37%	36%	37%		

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

² 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.

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

Sentence length	Average sentence length						Percentage change Q2 2011 to Q2 2012	Percentage change Q2 2010 to Q2 2012
	Q2 2010	Q2 2011	Q3 2011	Q4 2011	Q1 2012	Q2 2012		
average sentence length (days)								
England and Wales¹	189	187	198	226	214	241	29%	28%

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

* Offenders with sentence length recorded as zero have not been included in this analysis.

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.

Table 6: Offenders commencing a court order under probation supervision for possession of an offensive weapon¹

Court order starts	Q2 2010	Q2 2011	Q3 2011	Q4 2011	Q1 2012	Q2 2012	Number of starts and percentages	
							Percentage change Q2 2011 to Q2 2012	Percentage change Q2 2010 to Q2 2012
number of starts								
England and Wales	1,350	1,168	1,401	1,172	1,168	940	-20%	-30%
Community order	867	781	924	727	735	563	-28%	-35%
Suspended sentence order	466	385	475	445	432	377	-2%	-19%
Pre CJA orders	17	2	2	0	1	0	*	*
percentage of total starts								
Community order	64%	67%	66%	62%	63%	60%		
Suspended sentence order	35%	33%	34%	38%	37%	40%		
Pre CJA orders	1%	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.

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Table 7: Requirement starts for possession of offensive weapon¹

	Number of requirements and percentages						Percentage change Q2 2011 to Q2 2012	Percentage change Q2 2010 to Q2 2012
	Q2 2010	Q2 2011	Q3 2011	Q4 2011	Q1 2012	Q2 2012		
number of requirements								
Community order	1,393	1,248	1,515	1,246	1,216	911	-27%	-35%
Unpaid Work	466	413	474	399	388	274	-34%	-41%
Supervision	473	405	509	415	389	308	-24%	-35%
Curfew	95	74	80	69	76	61	-18%	-36%
Accredited program	134	117	129	132	120	87	-26%	-35%
Specified activity	46	42	46	38	29	29	*	*
Drug treatment	72	115	151	103	117	88	-23%	22%
Alcohol treatment	46	39	57	51	50	31	*	*
Mental health	27	17	28	11	12	13	*	*
Exclusion	8	1	6	7	8	7	*	*
Residential	13	4	6	7	5	2	*	*
Attendance centre	7	18	22	8	17	10	*	*
Prohibited activity	6	3	7	6	5	1	*	*
percentage of total requirements								
Unpaid work	33%	33%	31%	32%	32%	30%		
Supervision	34%	32%	34%	33%	32%	34%		
Other requirements	33%	31%	38%	31%	32%	24%		
number of requirements								
Suspended sentence order	817	682	898	770	758	674	-1%	-18%
Unpaid work	305	242	315	269	281	237	-2%	-22%
Supervision	222	187	220	205	210	170	-9%	-23%
Curfew	69	51	86	61	73	49	*	*
Accredited program	72	72	99	89	65	78	8%	8%
Specified activity	37	16	27	21	21	21	*	*
Drug treatment	40	32	38	25	24	31	*	*
Alcohol treatment	48	49	88	73	64	64	*	*
Mental health	9	6	6	5	3	4	*	*
Exclusion	3	7	5	2	2	5	*	*
Residential	3	8	3	3	4	5	*	*
Attendance centre	5	5	6	12	7	5	*	*
Prohibited activity	4	7	5	5	4	5	*	*
percentage of total requirements								
Unpaid work	27%	27%	24%	27%	28%	25%		
Supervision	37%	35%	35%	35%	37%	35%		
Other requirements	35%	37%	40%	38%	35%	40%		

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

	Number of requirements and percentages						Percentage change Q2 2011 to Q2 2012	Percentage change Q2 2010 to Q2 2012
	Q2 2010	Q2 2011	Q3 2011	Q4 2011	Q1 2012	Q2 2012		
number of requirements								
Community order	545	446	512	440	426	300	-33%	-45%
0-80 hours	211	190	204	174	159	124	-35%	-41%
81-150 hours	217	164	213	191	176	116	-29%	-47%
151-199 hours	37	28	30	21	21	17	*	*
200-250 hours	75	62	63	48	67	42	-32%	-44%
251-300 hours	5	2	2	6	3	1	*	*
percentage of total requirements								
0-80 hours	39%	43%	40%	40%	37%	41%		
81-150 hours	40%	37%	42%	43%	41%	39%		
151-199 hours	7%	6%	6%	5%	5%	6%		
200-250 hours	14%	14%	12%	11%	16%	14%		
251-300 hours	1%	0%	0%	1%	1%	0%		
number of requirements								
Suspended sentence order	238	205	219	224	221	181	-12%	-24%
0-80 hours	60	51	42	49	56	64	*	7%
81-150 hours	113	95	117	122	108	83	-13%	-27%
151-199 hours	12	17	17	17	15	14	*	*
200-250 hours	46	40	41	31	40	18	*	*
251-300 hours	7	2	2	5	2	2	*	*
percentage of total requirements								
0-80 hours	25%	25%	19%	22%	25%	35%		
81-150 hours	47%	46%	53%	54%	49%	46%		
151-199 hours	5%	8%	8%	8%	7%	8%		
200-250 hours	19%	20%	19%	14%	18%	10%		
251-300 hours	3%	1%	1%	2%	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

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.

Tackling Knives Action Programme (TKAP) Phase II finished in March 2010. An assessment of TKAP Phase II was published by the Home Office on 24 May 2010 and can be accessed from:

www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/science-research-statistics/research-statistics/crime-research/horr53/

Reports up to the period April to June 2010 have included a breakdown of the data by areas that were part of TKAP. However, due to the completion of TKAP Phase 1 and 2 in March 2010, a breakdown for these areas is not given in this bulletin but statistics up to the end of Phase 2 can be found in [‘Knife Possession Sentencing quarterly brief, April to June 2010’](#).

Tables 1 to 5

The data presented in tables 1 to 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’, which means that the figures for this category will be higher for the latest quarter. Immediate custody 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.

As an estimate for the change in figures, the table below shows the number of offenders recorded for each disposal at the time of publication for Q2 2011 compared with the latest figures available for Q2 2012.

Table 9: Change in the number of disposals for Q2 2011 between the time of publication and the most recent data available

Disposal Category	Number of offences during April - June 2011 recorded at the time of Q1 2011 publication	Most recent available figures for the number of offences which occurred between April - June 2011	Percentage change between figures for Q2 2011 at the time of Q2 2011 and Q2 2012 publications
number of offences			
England and Wales ¹	5,190	5,184	0%
Caution ²	1,184	1,193	1%
Absolute/Conditional discharge	178	187	5%
Fine	214	223	4%
Community sentence	1,612	1,568	-3%
Suspended sentence	596	576	-3%
Immediate custody	1,024	1,248	22%
Other disposal ³	382	189	-51%
percentage			
England and Wales ¹	100%	100%	
Caution ²	23%	23%	
Absolute/Conditional discharge	3%	4%	
Fine	4%	4%	
Community sentence	31%	30%	
Suspended sentence	11%	11%	
Immediate custody	20%	24%	
Other disposal ³	7%	4%	

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

² Cautions include juveniles receiving reprimands and warnings.

Tables 6 to 8 and Figure 3

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.

Definitions

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

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).

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. Cautions are given to **adult** offenders only, who must admit guilt and consent to a caution.

Reprimand and warning – available for **juvenile** offenders only. Reprimands can be given to first-time offenders for minor offences. Any further offending results in either a warning or charge. The warning triggers immediate referral to a local youth offending team. Reprimands and warnings for juveniles are the equivalent of cautions for adults. Therefore in the tables reprimands and 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 Youth Rehabilitation Order (YRO) which was introduced in November 2009. The YRO has replaced nine previous orders including the curfew order, action plan order, attendance centre order, supervision order, community rehabilitation order, community rehabilitation and punishment order, exclusion order, community punishment order and the drug treatment and testing order. The YRO is only available as a sentence if the offence was committed on or after 30 November 2009; for offences committed prior to this date the previous orders will be applicable.

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 to 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/statistics/criminal-justice/knife-possession

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