



Ministry
of Justice

Knife Possession Sentencing Quarterly Brief October to December 2014 England and Wales

Ministry of Justice
Statistics Bulletin

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Introduction

This bulletin presents key statistics describing the trends in cautioning and sentencing, probation supervision and the prison population for possession of a knife or offensive weapon in England and Wales. This bulletin does not cover all knife crimes (offences involving a knife) as published by the Office for National Statistics¹. Details of other official statistics publications regarding knife related statistics can be found on page 35 of this bulletin.

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

Statistics on offences of aggravated possession of a knife or offensive weapon are included in their own separate tables and are not included in other totals to enable consistent comparisons over time (since these offences were only introduced from 3 December 2012)

The structure and content of this report is continually being reviewed to reflect user requirements. If you have any feedback about these changes, or report more generally, please contact the production team using the contact details at the back of the report

The next publication of the Knife Possession Sentencing Quarterly Brief is scheduled to be published on 11th June 2015, covering the period January to March 2015

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

www.gov.uk/government/collections/knife-possession-sentencing-quarterly

¹ <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/crime-stats/crime-statistics/year-ending-september-2014/stb-crime-in-england-and-wales--year-ending-september-2014.html#tab-Offences-involving-knives-and-sharp-instruments>

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 for the period October to December 2014 (Q4 2014):

- 3,950 crimes were formally dealt with by the criminal justice system (CJS) for possession of a knife or offensive weapon offences, 4% less than the previous quarter and 1% higher than in Q4 2013. A similar pattern can be seen in each of the last six years where Q4 figures are lower than Q3.
- Over the longer term, there has been a downward trend in the number of these offences although since 2013 this appears to be levelling off. The number of offences is currently 46% less than the peak seen in Q3 2008 (7,280)

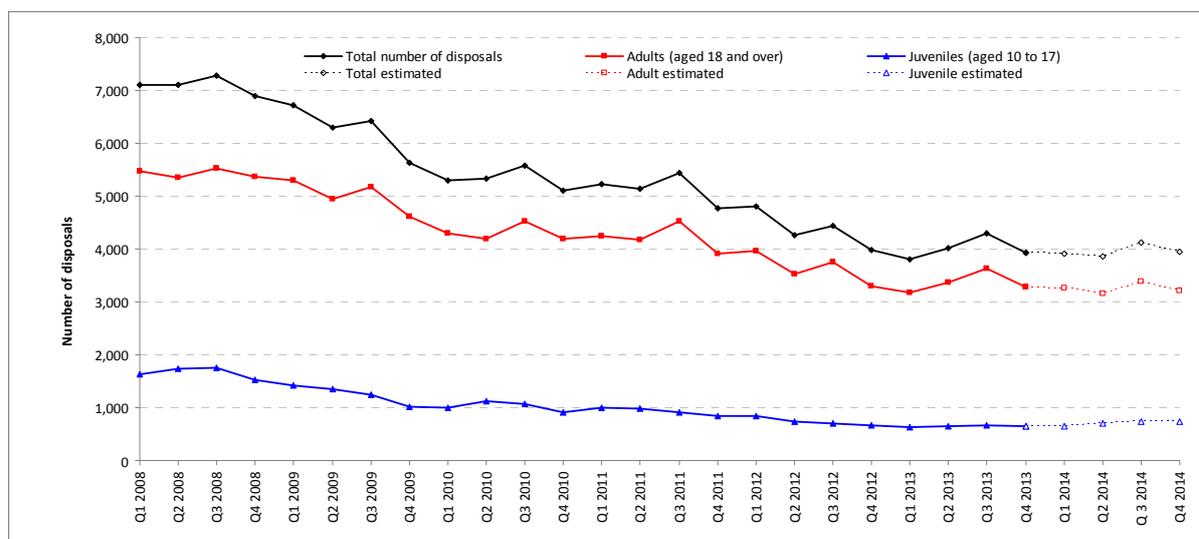
Of those crimes;

- 3,214 (81%) were adult offenders of which just under a third (32%) were given an immediate custodial sentence, a slight increase from 31% in the same period a year ago and up over the longer term. The proportion of adult offenders given cautions has fallen over time where the latest proportion (13%) has more than halved since the same period 7 years ago where it was 33%.and is one percentage point higher than in the same quarter a year ago.
- A little over one in five (22%) of adult offenders now receive a suspended sentence for these offences, an increase of two percentage points over the same period a year ago and the previous quarter. The proportion of suspended sentence orders for adults are now at it's highest since their introduction in April 2005.
- Compared to 7 years ago, juvenile offenders are now more likely to receive an immediate custodial sentence. 1 in every 10 juvenile offenders now goes to prison compared to 1 in 18 in 2007. There has been an increase (from 50% to 55%) in the proportion of juveniles given a community sentence between Q4 2013 and Q4 2014.
- The proportion of juveniles given a youth caution increased by one percentage point to 29% from a year ago, a proportion which is significantly lower than in the same quarter in 2008 where 34% of juvenile offenders received cautions.

Knife Possession Sentencing

- The total number of crimes formally dealt with by the criminal justice system has continued to fall for possession of a knife or an offensive weapons offence, with 3,950 offences in Q4 2014 compared to the peak seen in Q3 2008 (7,280).

Figure 1: Number of disposals given for knife and offensive weapon possession offences by age, in England and Wales, between Q1 2008 and Q4 2014

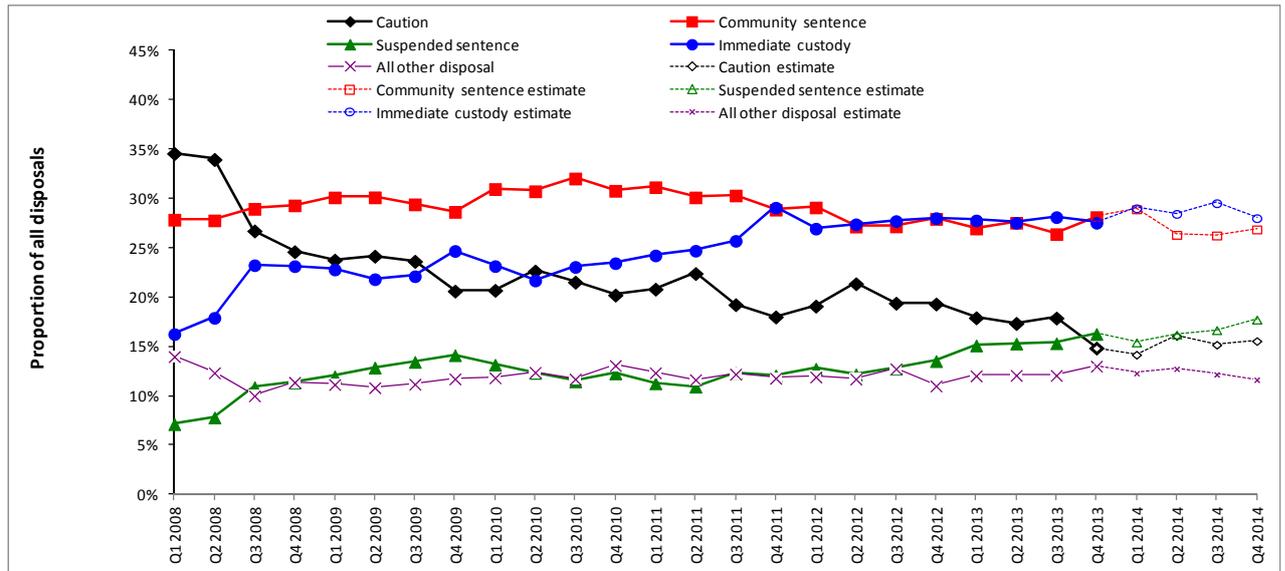


1: Knife Possession offences by disposal type

- The most common disposals for possession of a knife or an offensive weapon offence continues to be immediate custodial sentences (28%) followed by and community sentences (27%).
- The proportion of possession offences resulting in community sentences and immediate custodial sentences has remained fairly steady over the last year. Similarly, there has been little change in the proportion of fines and discharges given.
- Suspended sentences continue to increase and are now at 18% of all disposals, the highest it has ever been. Suspended sentences have taken over from cautions as the third most prevalent disposal.
- The proportion of offenders receiving cautions is 16%, one percentage point less than a year ago as well as in the previous quarter. The proportion of offenders getting a caution has fallen significantly over time by 76% from Q4 2007 where 37% of offenders received a caution. It should be noted that figures for the latest four quarters are estimated so these figures may change slightly once final outcomes are known.

- Over the longer term, the proportion of possession offences resulting in an immediate custodial sentence has increased since 2008 (from 16% in Q4 2007 to 28% in Q4 2014). The increase started particularly during 2008 when changes were made to the sentencing guidelines for knife possession as outlined earlier in this bulletin.

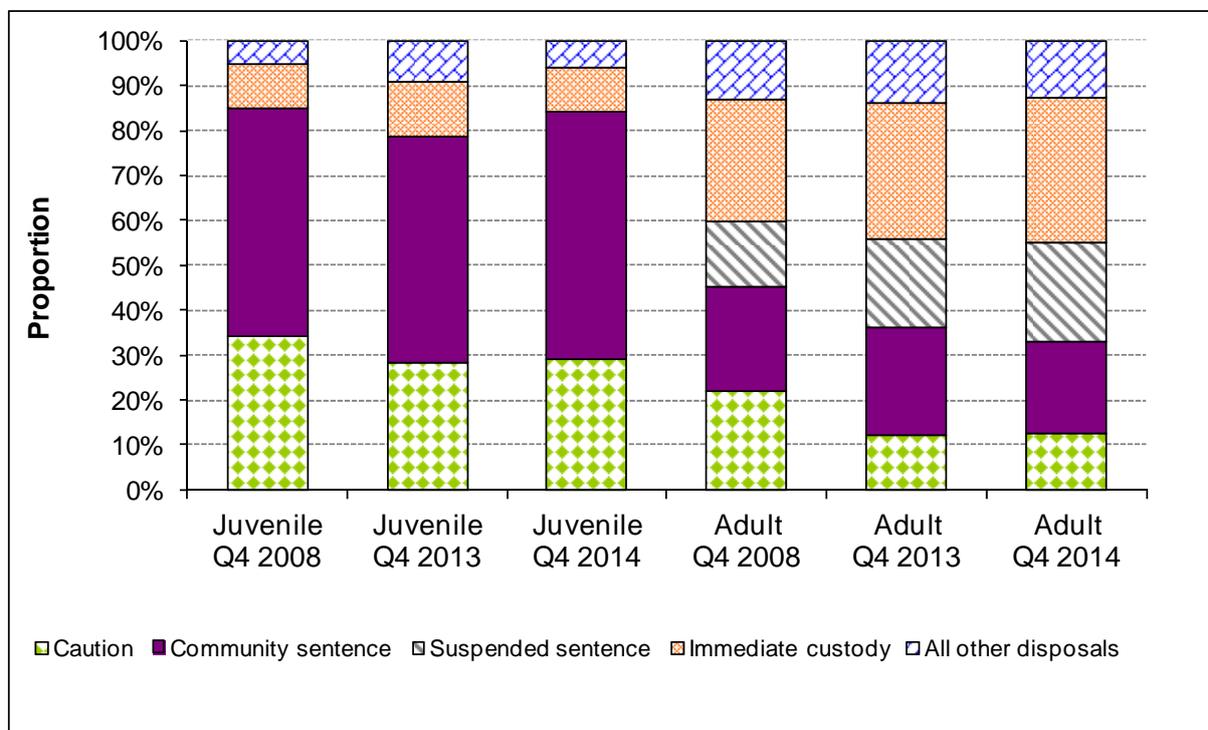
Figure 2: Proportion of type of disposal given for knife and offensive weapon possession in England and Wales, between Q1 2008 and Q4 2014



- Over half of all juveniles (55%) receiving disposals for possession offences were given a community sentence, while 29% were given a youth caution⁴, a proportion which has remained relatively stable during the last five quarters, but is significantly lower than in Q4 2007 where 47% of juvenile offenders received cautions.
- One in ten juveniles were given an immediate custodial sentence, down two percentage points on the same period one year ago.
- Just under a third (32%) of adult offenders were given an immediate custodial sentence, an increase of one percentage point compared to a year ago and is up 13 percentage points over the longer term (since Q4 2007). The proportion of adult offenders given cautions has fallen significantly over time where the latest proportion (13%) is one percentage point higher than in the same quarter a year ago, however, it has more than halved since the same period 7 years ago where it was 33%.
- The proportion of adult offenders receiving suspended sentences has increased over time. A little over one in five (22%) of adult offenders received a suspended sentence in Q4 2014 compared to one in ten (10%) in Q4 2007.

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

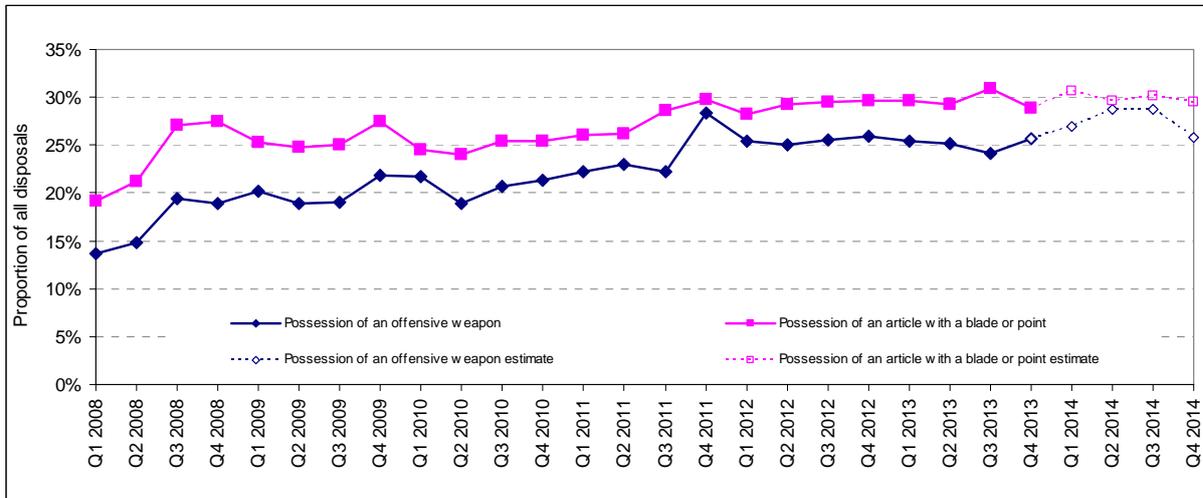
Figure 3: Proportion of type of disposal given for knife and offensive weapon possession for juveniles and adults, in England and Wales, Q4 2008, Q4 2013 and Q4 2014



2: Knife possession offences by type of offence

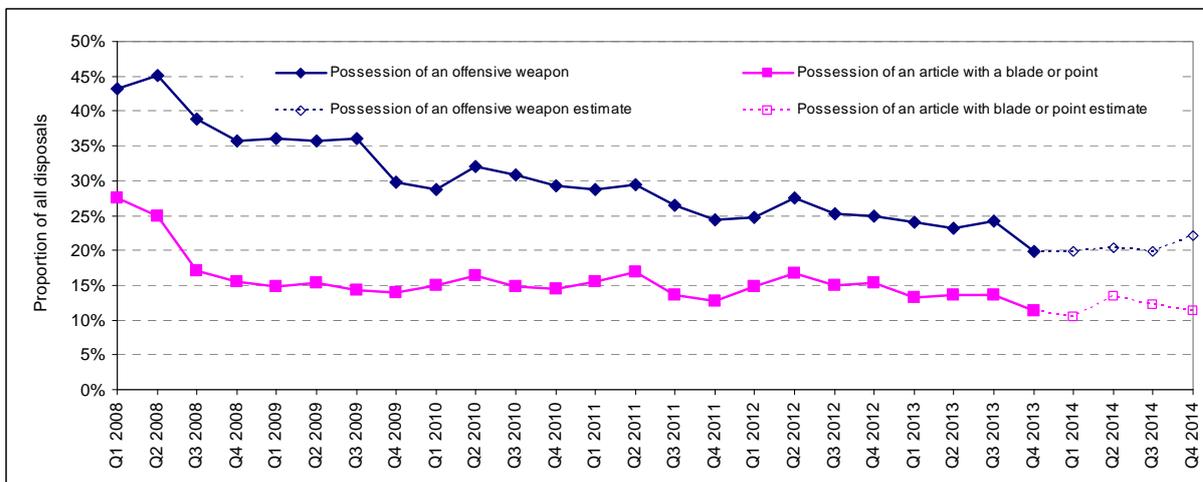
- A greater proportion of offences were for possession of an article with a blade or point compared to offences for possession of an offensive weapon (61% to 39% respectively).
- The number of possession offences involving an article with a blade or point has increased by 5% compared to Q4 2013, while possession offences for an offensive weapon fell by 5% over the same period.
- The proportion of offenders receiving a suspended sentence for offences involving the possession of an article with a blade or point has increased by two percentage points since the same quarter a year ago and is now at its highest (20%) since their introduction. This proportion has more than doubled since Q4 2007 where it was 9%
- The proportion of offenders receiving a suspended sentence for offences involving an offensive weapon has remained relatively stable over the last year, but has more than doubled to 15% since Q4 2007 where it was 7%
- Offenders convicted of offences involving the possession of an article with a blade or point are more likely to be given an immediate custodial sentence than offenders convicted of offences involving an offensive weapon, 30% compared to 26%.

Figure 4: Proportion of offences resulting in custodial sentences given for knife and offensive weapon possession in England and Wales, between Q1 2008 and Q4 2014



- Offenders convicted of offences involving an offensive weapon are more likely to be given a caution (22%) than offenders convicted of offences involving the possession of an article with a blade or point (where 11% were given cautions).

Figure 5: Proportion of offences resulting in cautions for knife and offensive weapon possession in England and Wales, between Q1 2008 and Q4 2014



3: Knife possession offences by length of immediate custodial sentence

- The average immediate custodial sentence length given for possession offences in the latest quarter was 224 days, or 7.5 months, compared to 215 days in Q4 2013. This is 71% (or 3.1 months) longer than the 131 days given in Q4 2007.
- Over time there has been an increase in the sentence length for offenders given immediate custodial sentences for possession offences. In the latest quarter, 39% of offenders were sentenced for over 6 months compared to only 13% of offenders at the end of 2007. While the proportion of offenders sentenced to immediate custody up to and including three months has fallen from 54% to 36% over the same period.

4: Knife possession offences by Police Force Area

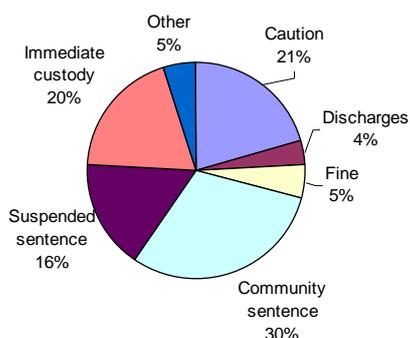
- In the 12 months ending December 2014, the rate of offences involving the possession of a knife or offensive weapon ranged from 13 to 50 per 100,000 of the population for each police force area.
- All police force areas have seen a decrease in the number of knife possession offences since the 12 months ending December 2008.

5: Criminal history of those cautioned or sentenced for knife possession offences

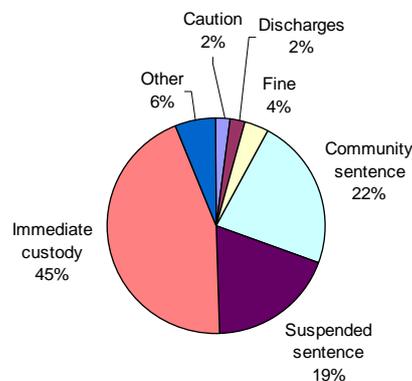
- The types of disposal given for knife possession offences are correlated with the number of previous cautions or convictions for possession offences. For offenders with no previous knife possession offences, 21% received a caution in the 12 months ending December 2014 with 30% receiving a community sentence and 20% given immediate custody. However, for offenders with at least one previous possession offence on their record, 45% were sentenced to immediate custody in the 12 months ending December 2014, while only 2% received a caution.
- Juvenile offenders are more likely to receive a community sentence whether or not they have a previous knife possession offence. Juvenile offenders having one or more previous knife possession offence are more likely to receive a community sentence (66%) than those with no previous knife possession offences (55%). Only 1% of juvenile offenders received a caution after having a previous possession offence which compares to 33% of offenders with one or more previous possession offences.
- The custody rate of adult offenders rises in relation with their number of previous possession offences, 23% of adult offenders with no previous conviction received an immediate custodial sentence compared to 59% for those with three or more previous offences.

Figure 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 December 2014, in England and Wales

Disposal for offenders with no previous knife possession offences



Disposal for offenders with one or more previous knife possession offences



6: Aggravated knife or offensive weapon possession offences

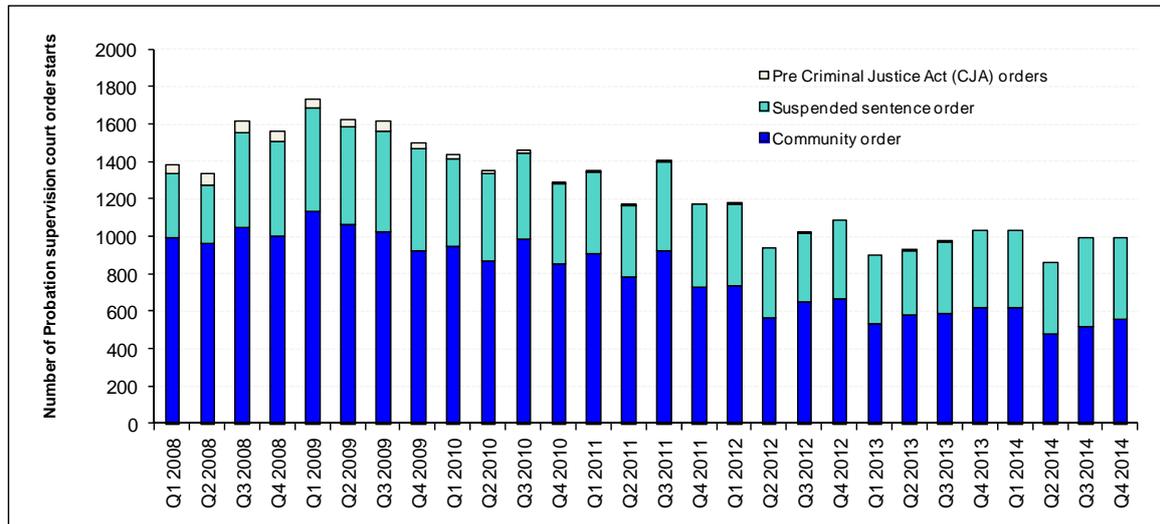
- On 3 December 2012, a new offence of aggravated knife possession came into effect and in the 12 months ending December 2014 a total of 426 offences (330 by adults, 96 by juveniles) have been formerly dealt with.
- Of the 96 offences committed by juveniles, 61 offences were committed by offenders aged between 10 and 15 when sentenced. (Sentencing guidelines differ for these age bands as explained on page 4).
- Of the 365 new offences of aggravated knife possession where offenders were aged 16 and over, 218 offences or 60% received an immediate custodial sentence, and 82% received either an immediate custodial sentence or suspended sentence order. These figures are provisional and are likely to change, in particular the number of immediate custodial sentences is likely to increase, once all sentences have been finalised.

7: Offenders commencing probation

- 993 offenders started a court order under probation supervision for possession offences. This is down 4% from Q4 2013 but up 1% from the previous quarter.
- The most common requirement placed on offenders starting court orders for possession offences was supervision – 33% of community orders (COs) and 37% of suspended sentence orders (SSOs). The next most common requirement was unpaid work – 25% of COs and 23% of SSOs, respectively.
- Where unpaid work requirements were placed upon those starting a community order for possession offences, 42% were for less than 80 hours and 48% were for

81 to 150 hours. For those starting suspended sentence orders, 24% were for under 80 hours and 56% were for 81 to 150 hours.

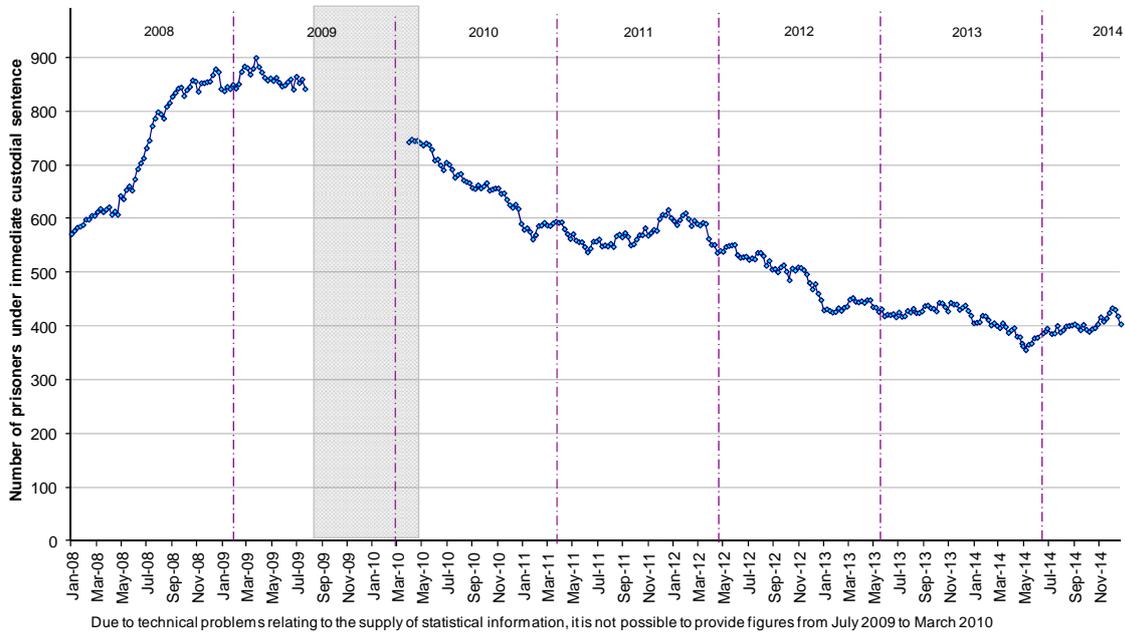
Figure 7: Number of offenders commencing a court order under probation supervision for possession of an offensive weapon, in England and Wales from Q1 2008 to Q4 2014



8: Offenders in prison for knife possession offences

- 404 offenders were in prison serving a sentence for possession of an offensive weapon on 26 December 2014, down 4% from a year ago and continuing the reductions seen in the prison population for this offence since early 2009. This trend comes despite the generally increasing use and length of custodial sentences for possession offences, and is likely to be primarily related to the reductions in the total number of offences dealt with over the period.

Figure 8: Prison population under sentence for possession of an offensive weapon⁵ (excludes recalls) in England and Wales, between January 2008 and December 2014



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

Annex A: Statistical Tables

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

Disposal Category ¹	Number of offences and percentage change							% change, Q4 2013 to estimated Q4 2014
	Q4 2011	Q4 2012	Q4 2013	Q1 2014 ^E	Q2 2014 ^E	Q3 2014 ^E	Q4 2014 ^E	
Number of offences								
England and Wales²	4,767	3,974	3,923	3,915	3,851	4,126	3,950	1
Caution ³	860	769	584	556	621	628	616	5
Absolute/Conditional discharge	158	115	128	157	123	135	101	-21
Fine	196	151	197	166	203	188	194	-2
Community sentence	1,378	1,112	1,105	1,133	1,015	1,085	1,063	-4
Suspended sentence	577	539	640	605	626	689	702	10
Immediate custody	1,388	1,115	1,082	1,137	1,097	1,220	1,108	2
Other disposal ⁴	210	173	187	160	166	181	166	-11
Percentage of total offences								
Caution ³	18	19	15	14	16	15	16	
Absolute/Conditional discharge	3	3	3	4	3	3	3	
Fine	4	4	5	4	5	5	5	
Community sentence	29	28	28	29	26	26	27	
Suspended sentence	12	14	16	15	16	17	18	
Immediate custody	29	28	28	29	28	30	28	
Other disposal ⁴	4	4	5	4	4	4	4	

Source: Police National Computer (PNC)

¹ The disposal given in this table is only the most severe of the disposals given as a result of the offender being found guilty and may also be dependent on other offences committed at the same time.

² England and Wales includes all 43 police force areas and the British Transport Police.

³ Cautions include juveniles receiving reprimands and warnings or youth cautions. Youth cautions were introduced on April 8th 2013 replacing reprimands and warnings for young offenders. The guidance is published at the link <http://www.justice.gov.uk/out->

⁴ Includes cases where an offender is committed to crown court for sentencing and is otherwise dealt with on conviction.

^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.

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

Disposal Category ²	Number of offences and percentages							% change, Q4 2013 to estimated Q4 2014
	Q4 2011 ³	Q4 2012 ³	Q4 2013 ³	Q1 2014 ^E	Q2 2014 ^E	Q3 2014 ^E	Q4 2014 ^E	
Number of offences								
Aged 10 to 17	844	666	642	651	696	745	736	15
Reprimands & warnings/Youth cautions ⁴	204	180	182	180	223	208	213	17
Absolute/conditional discharge	15	14	24	15	10	13	14	*
Fine	2	1	0	1	2	1	1	*
Community sentence	488	345	322	364	368	406	406	26
Suspended sentence	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	*
Immediate custody	100	78	79	69	62	78	71	-10
Other disposal ⁵	35	48	35	22	31	39	31	*
Percentage of total offences								
Reprimands & warnings/Youth cautions ⁴	24	27	28	28	32	28	29	
Absolute/conditional discharge	2	2	4	2	1	2	2	
Fine	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Community sentence	58	52	50	56	53	54	55	
Suspended sentence	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Immediate custody	12	12	12	11	9	10	10	
Other disposal ⁵	4	7	5	3	4	5	4	
Number of offences								
Aged 18 and over	3,921	3307	3,279	3,263	3,155	3,381	3,214	-2
Caution	655	589	401	376	398	420	403	0
Absolute/Conditional discharge	143	101	104	142	113	122	87	-16
Fine	194	150	197	165	201	187	193	-2
Community sentence	890	766	782	769	647	679	657	-16
Suspended sentence	577	539	640	605	626	689	702	10
Immediate custody	1,288	1,037	1,003	1,068	1,035	1,142	1,037	3
Other disposal ⁵	174	125	152	138	135	142	135	-11
Percentage of total offences								
Caution	17	18	12	12	13	12	13	
Absolute/Conditional discharge	4	3	3	4	4	4	3	
Fine	5	5	6	5	6	6	6	
Community sentence	23	23	24	24	21	20	20	
Suspended sentence	15	16	20	19	20	20	22	
Immediate custody	33	31	31	33	33	34	32	
Other disposal ⁵	4	4	5	4	4	4	4	

Source: Police National Computer (PNC)

¹ Includes all 43 police force areas and the British Transport Police.

² The disposal given in this table is only the most severe of the disposals given as a result of the offender being found guilty and may also be dependent on other offences committed at the same time.

³ The difference between the totals in Table 1 and the adult / juvenile breakdown is where there is no age recorded on the system

⁴ Since April 8th 2013 youth cautions were introduced replacing reprimands and warnings for young offenders. The guidance is published at the link <http://www.justice.gov.uk/out-of-court-disposals>

⁵ Includes cases where an offender is committed to crown court for sentencing and is otherwise dealt with on conviction.

^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.

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

Disposal Category ²	Number of offences and percentages							% change, Q4 2013 to estimated Q4 2014
	Q4 2011	Q4 2012	Q4 2013	Q1 2014 ^E	Q2 2014 ^E	Q3 2014 ^E	Q4 2014 ^E	
Number of offences								
Possession of an article with a blade or point	2,617	2,304	2,309	2,338	2,390	2,508	2,416	5
Caution ³	334	352	263	243	322	306	274	4
Absolute/Conditional discharge	103	76	88	101	82	90	65	-26
Fine	117	97	121	105	117	109	126	4
Community sentence	833	681	664	716	651	704	660	-1
Suspended sentence	330	316	395	377	414	447	474	20
Immediate custody	776	685	668	713	705	755	713	7
Other disposal ⁴	122	102	110	83	99	97	104	-5
Percentage of total offences								
Caution ³	13	15	11	10	13	12	11	
Absolute/Conditional discharge	4	3	4	4	3	4	3	
Fine	4	4	5	4	5	4	5	
Community sentence	32	30	29	31	27	28	27	
Suspended sentence	13	14	17	16	17	18	20	
Immediate custody	30	30	29	30	29	30	30	
Other disposal ⁴	5	4	5	4	4	4	4	
Number of offences								
Possession of an offensive weapon	2,150	1,670	1,614	1,576	1,461	1,618	1,534	-5
Caution ³	526	417	321	313	299	322	342	7
Absolute/Conditional discharge	55	39	40	56	41	45	36	*
Fine	79	59	76	61	86	79	68	-11
Community sentence	545	431	441	417	364	381	403	-9
Suspended sentence	247	221	245	228	212	242	228	-7
Immediate custody	610	432	414	424	392	465	395	-5
Other disposal ⁴	88	71	77	77	67	84	62	-19
Percentage of total offences								
Caution ¹	24	25	20	20	20	20	22	
Absolute/Conditional discharge	3	2	2	4	3	3	2	
Fine	4	4	5	4	6	5	4	
Community sentence	25	26	27	26	25	24	26	
Suspended sentence	11	13	15	14	15	15	15	
Immediate custody	28	26	26	27	27	29	26	
Other disposal ⁴	4	4	5	5	5	5	4	

Source: Police National Computer (PNC)

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

² The disposal given in this table is only the most severe of the disposals given as a result of the offender being found guilty and may also be dependent on other offences committed at the same time.

³ Cautions include juveniles receiving reprimands and warnings or youth cautions. Youth cautions were introduced on April 8th 2013 replacing reprimands and warnings for young offenders. The guidance is published at the link <http://www.justice.gov.uk/out>

⁴ Includes cases where an offender is committed to crown court for sentencing and is otherwise dealt with on conviction.

^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.

Table 4a: Proportion of knife and offensive weapon possession offences resulting in an immediate custodial sentence, by sentence length, in England and Wales¹

Sentence length ³	Offences resulting in immediate custody						
	Q4 2011	Q4 2012	Q4 2013	Q1 2014	Q2 2014	Q3 2014	Q4 2014
	Percentage of total offences						
Up to and including 3 months	35	33	35	39	35	33	36
Over 3 months and up to and including 6 months	29	32	27	26	29	28	26
Over 6 months	36	35	38	35	36	39	39

Source: Police National Computer (PNC)

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

² Figures are based on the current figures and not the estimates used in Tables 1 to 3.

³ Excludes life sentences.

Table 4b: Average sentence length of immediate custodial sentences for knife and offensive weapon possession offences in England and Wales

	Average Sentence length ³							% change, Q4 2013 to Q4 2014
	Q4 2011	Q4 2012	Q4 2013	Q1 2014	Q2 2014	Q3 2014	Q4 2014	
	Average sentence length (days)							
England and Wales ^{1,2}	218	214	215	211	221	241	224	4

Source: Police National Computer (PNC)

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

² Figures are based on the current figures and not the estimates used in Tables 1 to 3.

³ Excludes life sentences.

Table 5: Offences involving the possession of a knife or offensive weapon resulting in a caution or sentence for the 12 months ending December of each year, split by police force area in England and Wales

Police Force Area	Number of offences ¹							Number of offences as a rate per				
	12 months ending December							12 months ending December				
	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014 ²	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
England and Wales²	28,370	25,074	21,314	20,590	17,488	16,044	15,782	59	52	44	42	35
Avon and Somerset	766	676	572	527	514	415	356	55	48	41	37	36
Bedfordshire	313	325	286	252	237	181	195	61	63	55	48	44
Cambridgeshire	311	285	218	262	192	180	176	46	42	31	37	27
Cheshire	386	343	251	283	251	242	225	43	38	28	31	27
City of London	31	32	25	31	25	17	15	-	-	-	-	-
Cleveland	433	401	354	386	281	269	244	89	82	72	79	57
Cumbria	214	230	171	168	163	139	126	48	51	38	37	36
Derbyshire	418	314	319	351	271	225	273	47	35	36	39	30
Devon & Cornwall	582	528	422	398	307	299	328	39	36	28	27	20
Dorset	275	212	223	179	176	142	143	42	32	34	27	26
Durham	339	345	278	316	268	237	230	63	63	51	58	49
Dyfed-Powys	166	161	146	126	130	128	112	36	35	32	27	28
Essex	820	758	617	583	449	467	453	58	54	42	42	29
Gloucestershire	246	179	135	140	110	111	114	47	34	26	26	21
Greater Manchester	1444	1352	1132	1062	958	817	744	63	59	49	46	41
Gwent	343	260	231	258	186	160	131	69	52	46	51	36
Hampshire	781	688	583	499	447	411	387	48	42	35	30	27
Hertfordshire	399	380	332	303	301	207	236	42	40	35	31	31
Humberside	508	529	444	455	313	296	282	63	65	55	56	38
Kent	750	657	471	495	380	367	379	51	44	32	33	25
Lancashire	775	680	690	632	594	535	474	60	53	54	49	46
Leicestershire	420	329	344	298	258	224	231	48	38	39	33	29
Lincolnshire	307	262	242	228	194	181	180	49	42	38	36	30
Merseyside	898	836	648	621	552	482	503	74	69	53	51	45
Metropolitan Police	5517	4567	3997	4004	3143	3152	3317	82	67	58	57	44
Norfolk	314	263	278	277	220	190	214	42	35	37	36	29
North Wales	319	286	222	203	211	165	216	53	47	36	33	34
North Yorkshire	286	251	198	201	197	149	184	41	36	28	28	27
Northamptonshire	265	291	226	243	188	186	181	45	49	38	40	31
Northumbria	984	979	749	695	585	544	496	78	78	59	55	46
Nottinghamshire	617	591	543	502	466	447	407	65	62	57	52	48
South Wales	657	593	561	454	456	398	361	59	53	50	40	40
South Yorkshire	695	624	554	509	428	399	439	60	54	47	43	36
Staffordshire	392	373	327	328	316	254	301	41	39	34	34	32
Suffolk	237	254	183	168	181	183	152	38	40	29	26	28
Surrey	287	249	208	231	178	146	135	30	26	21	23	18
Sussex	717	602	486	427	429	373	357	52	43	34	30	30
ThamesValley	858	660	614	581	468	460	376	45	34	31	30	24
Warwickshire	178	165	124	127	102	97	94	37	34	26	26	21
West Mercia	485	419	399	373	328	244	279	45	39	37	34	30
West Midlands	1890	1583	1226	1216	1008	964	810	82	68	53	52	43
West Yorkshire	898	841	765	741	638	563	594	47	44	40	38	33
Wiltshire	195	213	175	137	106	129	93	34	36	30	23	18

Source: Police National Computer (PNC)

¹ Population has been based on mid-year population estimates for each age group supplied by the Office for National Statistics. The previous year's estimate has been used for calculating the rate in the subsequent year. For example, the 2007 mid-year calculating the rate for 2008 and so on.

² England and Wales includes all 43 police force areas and the British Transport Police

³ Figures in this table are based on current figures and do not use the estimation method used in Tables 1 to 3.

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

Table 6a: 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 December 2014, in England and Wales⁶

Disposal Category ^{1,5}	Number of previous convictions/cautions				
	Number of previous convictions / cautions				
	0	1	2	3 or more	Total
	Number of offenders				
England and Wales²	11,203	2,262	761	604	14,830
Caution ³	2,307	59	13	11	2,390
Absolute/Conditional discharge	399	59	14	8	480
Fine	572	92	17	19	700
Community sentence	3,384	577	140	96	4,197
Suspended sentence	1,822	458	145	82	2,507
Immediate custody	2,198	876	386	358	3,818
Other disposal ⁴	521	141	46	30	738
	Percentage				
Caution ³	21	3	2	2	16
Absolute/Conditional discharge	4	3	2	1	3
Fine	5	4	2	3	5
Community sentence	30	26	18	16	28
Suspended sentence	16	20	19	14	17
Immediate custody	20	39	51	59	26
Other disposal ⁴	5	6	6	5	5

Source: Police National Computer (PNC)

¹ The disposal given in this table is only the most severe of the disposals given as a result of the offender being found guilty and may also be dependent on other offences committed at the same time.

² England and Wales includes all 43 police force areas and the British Transport Police.

³ Cautions include juveniles receiving reprimands and warnings or youth cautions. Youth cautions were introduced on April 8th 2013 replacing reprimands and warnings for young offenders. The guidance is published at the link <http://www.justice.gov.uk/out-of-court-disposals>.

⁴ Includes cases where an offender is committed to crown court for sentencing and is otherwise dealt with on conviction.

⁵ Please note that the figures in this table are based on current figures and not the estimates used in Tables 1 to 3. In particular the number of immediate custodial sentences will rise as sentences passed by the Crown court become available on the Police National Computer.

⁶ Figures are based on counting the number of cautioning and sentencing occasions for offences committed by offenders. Offenders may appear more than once in the year, where they have been sentenced on multiple occasions within the year.

Table 6b: 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 December 2013, in England and Wales

Disposal Category ^{1,5}	Number of previous convictions/cautions				
	Number of previous convictions / cautions				Total
	0	1	2	3 or more	
Number of offenders					
England and Wales²	11,201	2,379	809	668	15,057
Cautions ³	2,589	95	15	9	2,708
Absolute/Conditional discharge	401	72	20	19	512
Fine	594	110	18	19	741
Community sentence	3,251	614	169	101	4,135
Suspended sentence	1,600	420	135	117	2,272
Immediate custody	2,338	965	407	374	4,084
Other disposal ⁴	428	103	45	29	605
Percentage					
Cautions ³	23	4	2	1	18
Absolute/Conditional discharge	4	3	2	3	3
Fine	5	5	2	3	5
Community sentence	29	26	21	15	27
Suspended sentence	14	18	17	18	15
Immediate custody	21	41	50	56	27
Other disposal ⁴	4	4	6	4	4

Source: Police National Computer (PNC)

¹ The disposal given in this table is only the most severe of the disposals given as a result of the offender being found guilty and may also depend on other offences committed at the same time.

² England and Wales includes all 43 police force areas and the British Transport Police.

³ Cautions include juveniles receiving reprimands and warnings or youth cautions. Youth cautions were introduced on April 8th 2013 replacing reprimands and warnings for young offenders. The guidance is published at the link <http://www.justice.gov.uk/out-of-court-disposals>.

⁴ Includes cases where an offender is committed to crown court for sentencing and is otherwise dealt with on conviction.

⁵ Figures are based on counting the number of cautioning and sentencing occasions for offences committed by offenders. Offenders may appear more than once in the year, where they have been sentenced on multiple occasions within the year.

Table 7a: 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 December 2014, split by age group in England and Wales^{1,6}

Disposal Category ^{2,5}	Number of previous convictions/cautions				
	Number of previous convictions / cautions				Total
	0	1	2	3 or more	
	Number of offenders				
Aged 10 to 17⁷	2,385	264	44	17	2,710
Reprimands & warnings/Youth cautions ³	795	4	0	0	799
Absolute/Conditional discharge	43	3	0	0	46
Fine	4	1	0	0	5
Community sentence	1,313	186	24	6	1,529
Immediate custody	148	51	17	10	226
Other disposal ⁴	82	19	3	1	105
	Percentage				
Reprimands & warnings/Youth cautions ³	33	2	*	*	29
Absolute/Conditional discharge	2	1	*	*	2
Fine	0	0	*	*	0
Community sentence	55	70	*	*	56
Immediate custody	6	19	*	*	8
Other disposal ⁴	3	7	*	*	4
	Number of offenders				
Aged 18 and over⁷	8,817	1,998	717	587	12,119
Caution	1,512	55	13	11	1,591
Absolute/Conditional discharge	356	56	14	8	434
Fine	568	91	17	19	695
Community sentence	2,070	391	116	90	2,667
Suspended sentence	1,822	458	145	82	2,507
Immediate custody	2,050	825	369	348	3,592
Other disposal ⁴	439	122	43	29	633
	Percentage				
Caution	17	3	2	2	13
Absolute/Conditional discharge	4	3	2	1	4
Fine	6	5	2	3	6
Community sentence	23	20	16	15	22
Suspended sentence	21	23	20	14	21
Immediate custody	23	41	51	59	30
Other disposal ⁴	5	6	6	5	5

Source: Police National Computer (PNC)

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

² The disposal given in this table is only the most severe of the disposals given as a result of the offender being found guilty and may also be dependent on other offences committed at the same time.

³ Since April 8th 2013 youth cautions were introduced replacing reprimands and warnings for young offenders. The guidance is published at the link <http://www.justice.gov.uk/out-of-court-disposals>.

⁴ Includes cases where an offender is committed to crown court for sentencing and is otherwise dealt with on conviction.

⁵ Please note that the figures in this table are based on current figures and not the estimates used in Tables 1 to 3. In particular the number of immediate custodial sentences will rise as sentences passed by the Crown court become available on the Police National Computer.

⁶ Figures are based on counting the number of cautioning and sentencing occasions for offences committed by offenders. Offenders may appear more than once in the year, where they have been sentenced on multiple occasions within the year.

⁷ The difference between the totals in Table 6a and the adult / juvenile breakdown in this table, is where there is no age recorded on the system.

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

Table 7b: 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 December 2013, split by age group in England and Wales^{1,6}

Disposal Category ²	Number of previous convictions/cautions				
	Number of previous convictions / cautions				Total
	0	1	2	3 or more	
Number of offenders					
Aged 10 to 17⁶	2,176	242	47	17	2,482
Reprimands & warnings/Youth cautions ³	735	12	0	0	747
Absolute/Conditional discharge	65	10	1	2	78
Fine	6	0	0	0	6
Community sentence	1,094	138	19	4	1,255
Immediate custody	178	57	19	10	264
Other disposal ⁴	98	25	8	1	132
Percentage					
Reprimands & warnings/Youth cautions ³	34	5	*	*	30
Absolute/Conditional discharge	3	4	*	*	3
Fine	0	0	*	*	0
Community sentence	50	57	*	*	51
Immediate custody	8	24	*	*	11
Other disposal ⁴	5	10	*	*	5
Number of offenders					
Aged 18 and over⁶	9,022	2,136	762	651	12,571
Caution	1,853	83	15	9	1,960
Absolute/Conditional discharge	336	62	19	17	434
Fine	588	110	18	19	735
Community sentence	2,156	475	150	97	2,878
Suspended sentence	1,600	420	135	117	2,272
Immediate custody	2,159	908	388	364	3,819
Other disposal ⁴	330	78	37	28	473
Percentage					
Caution	21	4	2	1	16
Absolute/Conditional discharge	4	3	2	3	3
Fine	7	5	2	3	6
Community sentence	24	22	20	15	23
Suspended sentence	18	20	18	18	18
Immediate custody	24	43	51	56	30
Other disposal ⁴	4	4	5	4	4

Source: Police National Computer (PNC)

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

² The disposal given in this table is only the most severe of the disposals given as a result of the offender being found guilty and may also be dependent on other offences committed at the same time.

³ Since April 8th 2013 youth cautions were introduced replacing reprimands and warnings for young offenders. The guidance is published at the link <http://www.justice.gov.uk/out-of-court-disposals>.

⁴ Includes cases where an offender is committed to crown court for sentencing and is otherwise dealt with on conviction.

⁵ Figures are based on counting the number of cautioning and sentencing occasions for offences committed by offenders. Offenders may appear more than once in the year, where they have been sentenced on multiple occasions within the year.

⁶ The difference between the totals in Table 6b and the adult / juvenile breakdown in this table, is where there is no age recorded on the system.

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

Table 8: Offences involving threatening with a knife or offensive weapon resulting in a caution or sentence in England and Wales, Q3 2013 to Q4 2014

Disposal Category	Number of offences and percentages					12 months ending December 2014
	Q4 2013	Q1 2014	Q2 2014	Q3 2014	Q4 2014	
	Number of offences					
England and Wales¹	68	83	105	112	126	426
Caution ²	2	3	2	3	6	14
Absolute/Conditional discharge	0	0	0	2	0	2
Fine	0	0	0	0	0	0
Community sentence	12	17	23	17	21	78
Suspended sentence	10	20	11	20	29	80
Immediate custody	43	38	61	64	62	225
Other disposal ³	1	5	8	6	8	27
	Percentage					
Caution ²	3	4	2	3	5	3
Absolute/Conditional discharge	0	0	0	2	0	0
Fine	0	0	0	0	0	0
Community sentence	18	20	22	15	17	18
Suspended sentence	15	24	10	18	23	19
Immediate custody	63	46	58	57	49	53
Other disposal ³	1	6	8	5	6	6

Source: Police National Computer (PNC)

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

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

³ Includes cases where an offender is committed to crown court for sentencing and is otherwise dealt with on conviction.

⁴ An additional breakdown showing previous knife possession offences for these offenders is available in table 8b.

⁵ Figures in this table are based on current figures and do not use the estimation methodology used for Tables 1 to 3.

Table 9: Offences involving threatening with a knife or offensive weapon resulting in a caution or sentence by age group in England and Wales, 12 months ending December 2014

Disposal Category	Number of offences			Total
	Adults	Juveniles		
		10-15	16-17	
England and Wales^{1,4}	330	61	35	426
Caution ²	6	8	0	14
Absolute/Conditional discharge	2	0	0	2
Fine	0	0	0	0
Community sentence	22	41	15	78
Suspended sentence	80	0	0	80
Immediate custody	201	7	17	225
Other disposal ³	19	5	3	27

Source: Police National Computer (PNC)

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

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

³ Includes cases where an offender is committed to crown court for sentencing and is otherwise dealt with on conviction.

⁴ An additional breakdown showing previous knife possession offences for these offenders is available in table 8b.

⁵ Please note the figures in this table are based on current figures and do not use the estimation methodology used for Tables 1 to 3.

Table 10: Offenders commencing a court order under probation supervision for possession of an offensive weapon¹, in England and Wales

Number of starts and percentages								
Court order starts								
	Q4 2011	Q4 2012	Q4 2013	Q1 2014	Q2 2014 ²	Q3 2014	Q4 2014	% change, Q4 2013 to Q4 2014
number of starts								
England and Wales	1,172	1,084	1,032	1,034	859	988	993	-4
Community order	727	662	621	614	475	517	558	-10
Suspended sentence order	445	422	411	420	384	471	435	6
percentage of total starts								
Community order	62	61	60	59	55	52	56	
Suspended sentence order	38	39	40	41	45	48	44	

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

² The number of starts in the quarter April to June 2014 are slightly under-counted due to a change in the data collection methodology and the transition from probation trusts to NPS Divisions/CRCs

*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 and are subject to revision in future editions.

Table 11: Requirement starts for possession of offensive weapon¹, in England and Wales

	Q4 2011	Q4 2012	Q4 2013	Q1 2014	Q2 2014 ²	Q3 2014	Q4 2014	% change Q4 2013 to Q4 2014
Number of requirements								
Community order	1,246	1,049	1,000	985	804	843	995	-1
Unpaid Work	399	335	270	289	207	249	247	-9
Supervision	415	345	358	327	271	292	333	-7
Curfew	132	57	97	125	109	99	116	20
Accredited program	69	49	59	37	46	40	59	0
Specified activity	103	37	91	95	66	88	86	-5
Drug treatment	38	95	31	37	29	32	33	*
Alcohol treatment	51	93	44	43	34	20	35	*
Mental health	11	16	20	9	11	11	20	*
Exclusion	7	4	5	5	4	0	11	*
Residential	7	4	2	5	5	2	4	*
Attendance centre	8	10	20	11	10	7	14	*
Prohibited activity	6	4	3	2	12	3	37	*
Percentage of total requirements								
Unpaid work	32	32	27	29	26	30	25	
Supervision	33	33	36	33	34	35	33	
Curfew	11	5	10	13	14	12	12	
Other requirements	24	30	28	25	27	24	30	
Number of requirements								
Suspended sentence order	770	767	679	658	590	876	803	18
Unpaid work	205	193	160	168	147	225	182	14
Supervision	269	274	250	236	208	314	297	19
Curfew	89	75	75	78	78	90	95	27
Accredited program	61	57	61	50	47	84	73	20
Specified activity	73	78	65	48	51	76	59	-9
Drug treatment	21	26	23	29	19	16	24	*
Alcohol treatment	25	35	23	27	19	45	36	*
Mental health	3	2	9	2	3	3	6	*
Exclusion	2	3	4	4	3	8	6	*
Residential	12	16	3	2	4	4	2	*
Attendance centre	5	2	3	10	3	7	8	*
Prohibited activity	5	6	3	4	8	4	15	*
Percentage of total requirements								
Unpaid work	27	25	24	26	25	26	23	
Supervision	35	36	37	36	35	36	37	
Curfew	12	10	11	12	13	10	12	
Other requirements	27	29	29	27	27	28	29	

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

² The number of starts in the quarter April to June 2014 are slightly under-counted due to a change in the data collection methodology and the transition from probation trusts to NPS Divisions/CRCs

*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 and are subject to revision in future editions.

Table 12: Unpaid work requirements started by length of requirement given for possession of offensive weapon¹, in England and Wales

Number of requirements and percentages								
	Q4 2011	Q4 2012	Q4 2013	Q1 2014	Q2 2014 ³	Q3 2014 ³	Q4 2014 ³	% change Q4 2013 to Q4 2014
Number of requirements								
Community order ²	440	365	269	269	171	172	187	-30
0-80 hours	174	144	117	117	71	48	79	-32
81-150 hours	191	165	105	105	68	97	89	-15
151-199 hours	21	21	15	15	9	8	3	*
200-250 hours	48	36	32	32	23	19	16	*
251-300 hours	6	2	0	0	0	0	0	*
Percentage of total requirements								
0-80 hours	40	39	43	43	42	28	42	
81-150 hours	43	45	39	39	40	56	48	
151-199 hours	5	6	6	6	5	5	2	
200-250 hours	11	10	12	12	13	11	9	
251-300 hours	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	
Number of requirements								
Suspended sentence order ²	224	206	153	162	105	169	133	-13
0-80 hours	49	51	29	44	22	35	32	*
81-150 hours	122	106	83	83	59	93	74	-11
151-199 hours	17	8	13	8	8	12	8	*
200-250 hours	31	38	26	25	16	25	18	*
251-300 hours	5	3	2	2	0	4	1	*
Percentage of total requirements								
0-80 hours	22	25	19	27	21	21	24	
81-150 hours	54	51	54	51	56	55	56	
151-199 hours	8	4	8	5	8	7	6	
200-250 hours	14	18	17	15	15	15	14	
251-300 hours	2	1	1	1	0	2	1	

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

² The total unpaid work requirements in this table will not match those in Table 11, as the data sources used to collect the data are different.

³ The number of starts in these quarters are slightly under-counted due to a change in the data collection methodology and the transition from probation trusts to NPS Divisions/CRCs. It is hoped that numbers will return to expected levels in future quarter

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 and are subject to revision in future editions.

Annex B: Assessing the accuracy of estimation method

This appendix assesses the accuracy of the methodology introduced in the October to December 2013 bulletin, to estimate the number and breakdown of disposals given for the possession of a knife or an offensive weapon in the most recent four quarters.

These estimates were introduced to account for the changes seen in the disposal figures from those initially published for each quarter to those released over the following year as data held on the Police National Computer (PNC) was updated with new information. In particular the number of immediate custodial sentences recorded on the PNC was seen to increase significantly over time – as sentences passed by the Crown court became available on the system. As the scale of the changes to these figures over time was very stable, a new methodology was introduced to predict these final sentencing figures for the most recent four quarters.

It has now been two years since this new methodology of estimating disposal figures was introduced; we continue to assess the accuracy of the estimation method used. Table 13 below illustrates the accuracy of the estimation process that was used to provide the statistics that were published for Q4 2013.

Table 13: Changes in the number of disposals reported for knife possession offences in Q4 2013 between the non-estimated figures, the estimated figures and the final actual figures

Disposal category	Q4 2013 - non estimated	Q 2013- estimated	Q4 2013 - actual figures	% change - non estimated to actual figures	% change - estimated to actual figures
Caution	568	578	584	3	1
Absolute/Conditional discharge	122	132	128	5	-3
Fine	172	184	197	15	7
Community sentence	1,135	1113	1,105	-3	-1
Suspended sentence	627	612	640	2	5
Immediate custody	897	1083	1,082	21	0
Other disposal	357	195	187	-48	-4
All disposals	3,878	3,897	3,923	1	1

The table compares the Q4-2013 non-estimated and estimated figures by disposal group with the actual figures published one year on. As outlined above, figures show that there were large differences between the non-estimated and the actual final figures for those receiving an immediate custodial sentence or other disposal, with differences of 21% and 48% respectively. When comparing the estimated figures for these disposals there is less change between the two, with figures differing by around 0-4%. This shows that the methodology being used has been successful in predicting the changes seen in disposals over the year and future bulletins will continue to use this methodology. We will continue to review this methodology and provide updates on the accuracy of our estimates.

In the future we are going to be looking into extending this estimation methodology for the aggravated knife offences.

Annex C: Explanatory notes

Data quality and sources

Tables 1 to 9

The statistics presented in tables 1 to 9 in this Bulletin are drawn from an extract of data held on the Police National Computer (PNC) as at 06 February 2015.

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 Q4 2012 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 this has been reviewed in Appendix B.

Tables 10 to 12 and Figures 7 and 8

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) and
- Ministry of Defence (MOD)

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).

Aggravated knife offence codes include: The PNC data (tables 8 and 9) produced 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 **adults** only.

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*.

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/crime-stats/crime-statistics/year-ending-september-2014/stb-crime-in-england-and-wales--year-ending-september-2014.html#tab-Offences-involving-knives-and-sharp-instruments>

Additional (Tables 9 and 10) information on recorded crime for selected violent and sexual offences involving a knife or sharp instrument and offences involving firearms:

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/publications/re-reference-tables.html?edition=tcm%3A77-372973>

- 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

Contact Points

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

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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 United Kingdom is available from www.statistics.gov.uk

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