



Knife Possession Sentencing Quarterly, England and Wales – January to March 2017

Main points

5,184 knife possession offences dealt with by the CJS



The number of knife possession offences dealt with by the CJS has risen by 11% since Q1 2016, and is accounted for primarily by increases in blade or point offences. This figure has increased across a majority of police force areas in this time period.

39% of adult offenders and 13% of juvenile offenders were given an immediate custodial sentence



This represents an increase of 20 percentage points for adult offenders and 7 percentage points for juvenile offenders since Q1 2008.

7% of adult offenders received a caution



For adults, this is the lowest rate since this publication series began, almost a decade ago.

The average custodial sentence length was 7.6 months



For those sentenced to immediate custody, the average custodial sentence length for knife possession offences has risen by 2.8 months (58%) since Q1 2008.

86% of adult repeat offenders received a custodial sentence



This figure has increased by 2 percentage points when compared to Q1 2016 for offenders convicted under section 22 of the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015.

Presented are key statistics describing the trends in both the number of offenders receiving cautions and convictions, and those in prison for knife possession offences in England and Wales. It should be noted that figures for the latest quarter (January to March) are provisional. For technical detail, please refer to the accompanying technical guide to knife possession sentencing statistics¹.

We are changing how our quarterly bulletins look, and would welcome any feedback to commentary.champions@justice.gsi.gov.uk

For other feedback related to the content of this publication, please let us know at statistics.enquiries@justice.gsi.gov.uk

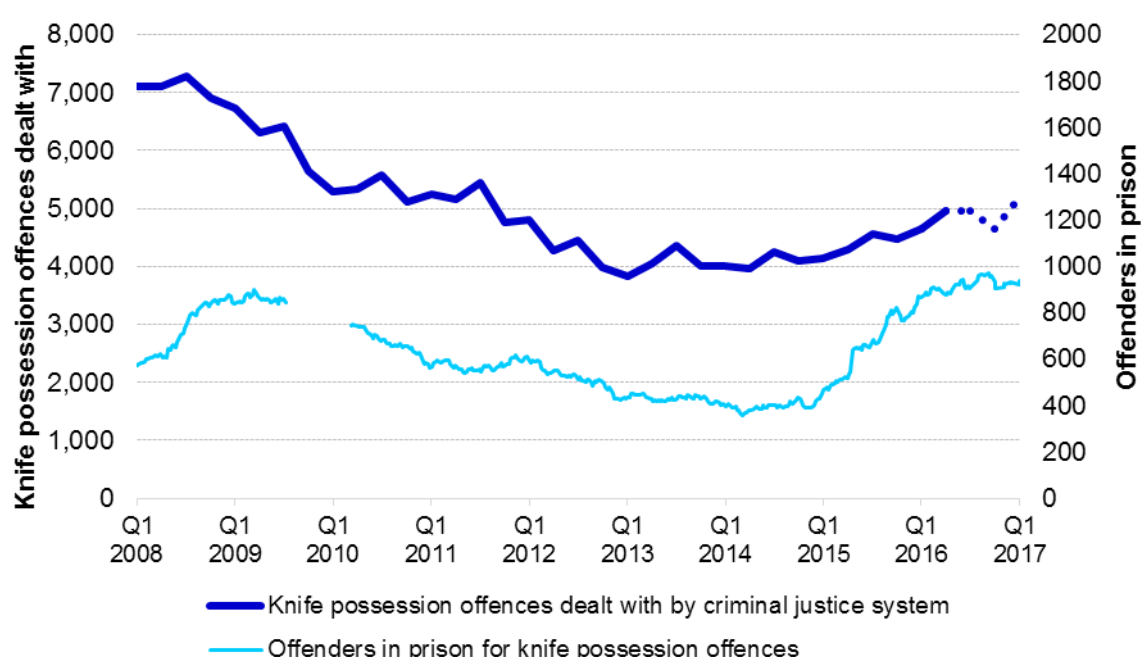
¹ www.gov.uk/government/collections/knife-possession-sentencing-quarterly

1. Knife possession offences overview

5,184 knife possession offences were formally dealt with by the Criminal Justice System (CJS) in Q1 2017

The number of knife possession offences dealt with by the CJS has risen by 11% since Q1 2016. This change has been driven by the increase in the number of blade or point possession offences.

Figure 1: Knife possession offences resulting in a caution or conviction, and prison population under sentence for a knife possession offence², England and Wales, Q1 2008 – Q1 2017 (Source: Table 1)



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

Between 2007 and 2014 there was a gradual decline in the number of knife possession offences dealt with by the CJS. Over the same period there was a decline in the number of knife possession offenders in prison.

Since Q1 2015, both of these trends have reversed. However, the number of offenders in prison for knife possession offences has risen much faster than the total number of offences dealt with in this period, as shown in Figure 1.

This can be explained at least in part by the fact that the proportion of offenders being sentenced to immediate custody has increased from 31% to 34% during this period and their average sentence length rose from 7.5 to 7.6 months. Therefore, more of these offenders are going to prison, and are staying there for longer.

² Includes offensive weapons. Knife possession figures for last four quarters are estimates – see technical guidance for details.

2. Cautions vs. Custodial sentences

39% of adult offenders and 13% of juvenile offenders were given an immediate custodial sentence

This represents an increase of 20 percentage points for adult offenders and 7 percentage points for juvenile offenders since Q1 2008.

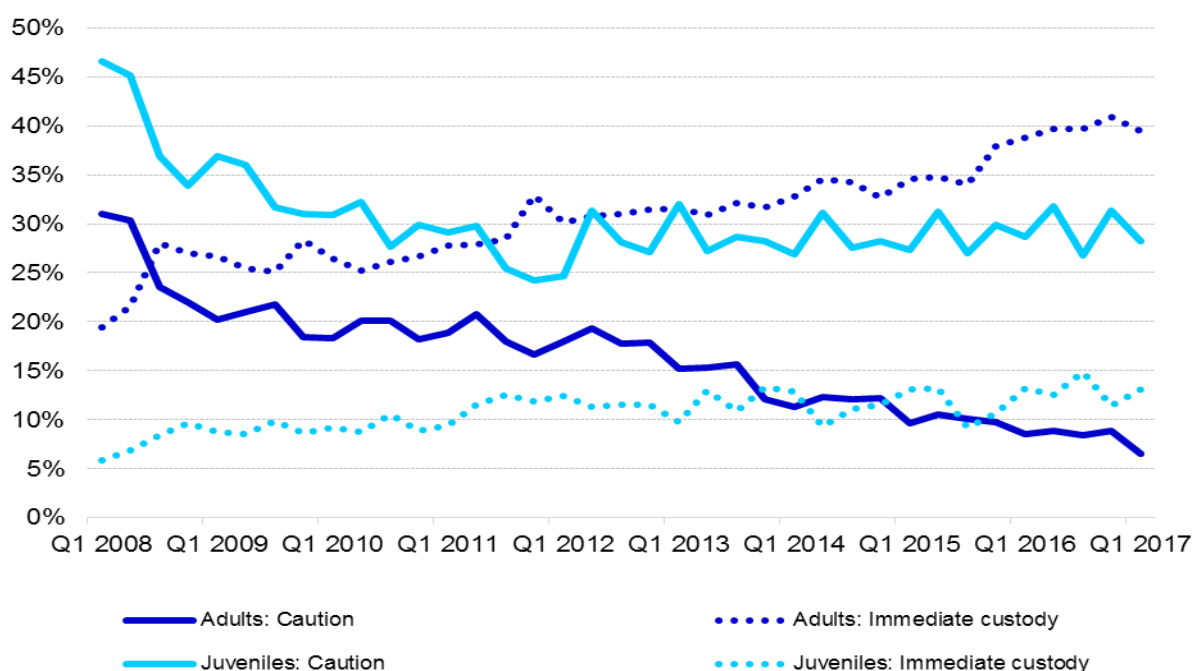
7% of adult offenders and 28% of juvenile offenders received a caution

These figures have fallen by 24 percentage points for adult offenders and 19 percentage points for juvenile offenders since Q1 2008. This is the lowest rate for adults since Q4 2007.

The average custodial sentence length was 7.6 months

For those sentenced to immediate custody, the average custodial sentence length for knife possession offences has risen by 2.8 months (58%) since Q1 2008

Figure 2: Proportion of adult and juvenile offenders given cautions or immediate custodial sentences for knife possession offences in England and Wales, Q1 2008 to Q1 2017 (Source: Table 2)



The most common disposal for a knife possession offence received by adults continues to be immediate custody (39%) followed by suspended sentence (25%) and community sentence (17%). For juveniles the most common disposals were community sentence (53%), caution (28%) and immediate custody (13%).

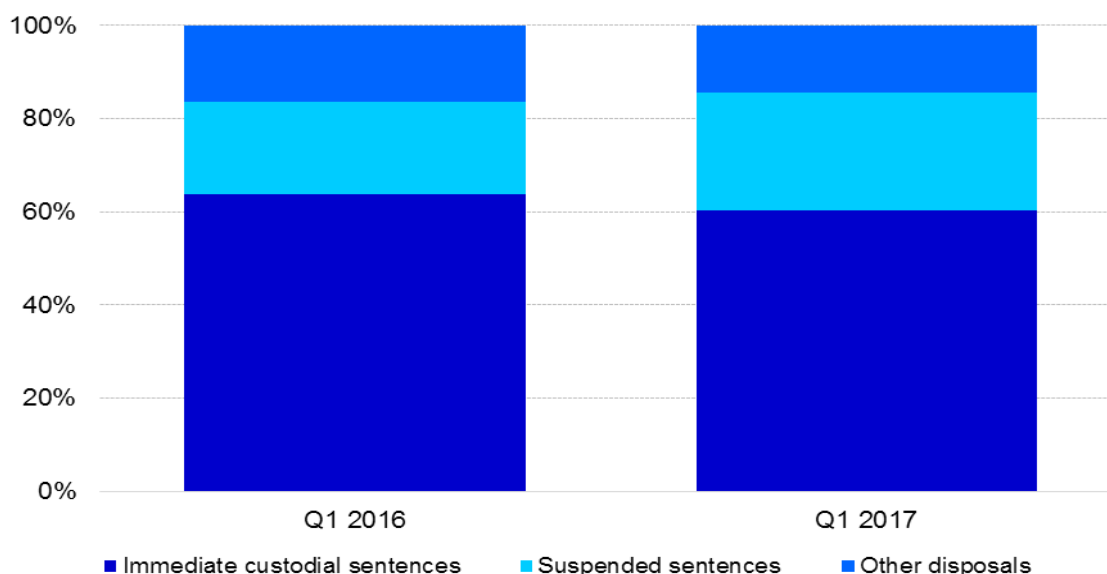
A quarter (24%) of all knife possession offences in the year ending March 2017 resulting in a caution or conviction were prosecuted by the Metropolitan Police. Outcomes for knife possession offences have increased across a majority of police force areas.

3. Minimum sentencing for repeat offences involving possession of a knife or offensive weapon offences

86% of adult repeat offenders received a custodial sentence

This figure increased by 2 percentage points when compared to the same quarter in the previous year for offenders convicted under section 22 of the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015³.

Figure 3: Adult repeat offenders dealt with by the criminal justice system, by disposal type, in Q1 2016 and Q1 2017



The number of repeat knife possession sentencing occasions increased from 837 in Q1 2016 to an estimated 1,129 cases Q1 2017.

Those offenders receiving an immediate custodial sentence had an average sentence length of 7.2 months.

Of the 1,129 occasions, 1,043 were adults, 60% of whom received immediate custodial sentences – a fall of 4 percentage points on Q1 2016. An additional 25% received a suspended sentence order, this has increased 5 percentage points since Q1 2016.

The remaining 86 cases in Q1 2017 were 16 to 17 year-olds; 49% received an immediate custodial sentence and 45% received a community sentence. The proportion receiving a community sentence has gone up by 1 percentage point since Q1 2016, while those getting immediate custody remained the same.

The proportion of 16 to 17 year olds getting a community sentence is higher than that of adults because a non-custodial sentence may be given where the offender pleads guilty (94% of 16 to 17 year olds pleaded guilty in this period, and young offenders cannot receive a custodial sentence of less than four months in the Youth Court).

³ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/2/part/1/crossheading/repeat-offences-involving-offensive-weapons-etc

Further information

The data presented in this publication are provisional. Figures provided for more recent quarters are subject to change in future publications as ongoing cases pass through the Criminal Justice System.

A technical guide providing further information on how the data is collected and processed, as well as information on the revisions policy and legislation relevant to knife possession sentencing can be found at

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

Accompanying files

As well as this bulletin, the following products are published as part of this release:

- A set of tables

Official Statistics status

Official statistics are produced under the remit of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. They are produced impartially and are free from political influence. More information can be found on the UK Statistics Authority website, accessible via the link below.

www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/monitoring-and-assessment/code-of-practice/

Contact

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

Tel: 020 3334 3536

Email: newsdesk@justice.gsi.gov.uk

Other enquiries about these statistics should be directed to the Justice Statistics Analytical Services division of the Ministry of Justice:

Craig Medhurst, Ministry of Justice, 7th Floor, 102 Petty France, London, SW1H 9AJ

Email: statistics.enquiries@justice.gsi.gov.uk

Next update: 14 September 2017

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

© Crown copyright

Produced by the Ministry of Justice

Alternative formats are available on request from statistics.enquiries@justice.gsi.gov.uk