



Knife Possession Sentencing Quarterly, England and Wales – October to December 2016

Main points

4,602 knife possession offences dealt with by the CJS



The number of knife possession offences dealt with by the CJS has risen by 3% since Q4 2015, and is accounted for primarily by increases amongst juvenile offenders. This figure has increased across most police force areas in this time period.

41% of adult offenders and 11% of juvenile offenders were given an immediate custodial sentence



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

9% of adult offenders and 31% of juvenile offenders received a caution



These figures have fallen by 13 percentage points for adult offenders and 3 percentage points for juvenile offenders since Q4 2008.

The average custodial sentence length was 7.7 months



For those sentenced to immediate custody, the average custodial sentence length for knife possession offences has risen by 1.9 months (33%) since Q4 2008.

64% of adult repeat offenders received an immediate custodial sentence



This figure has increased by 5 percentage points when compared to Q4 2015 for offenders convicted under the new minimum sentencing legislation.

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 (October to December) 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

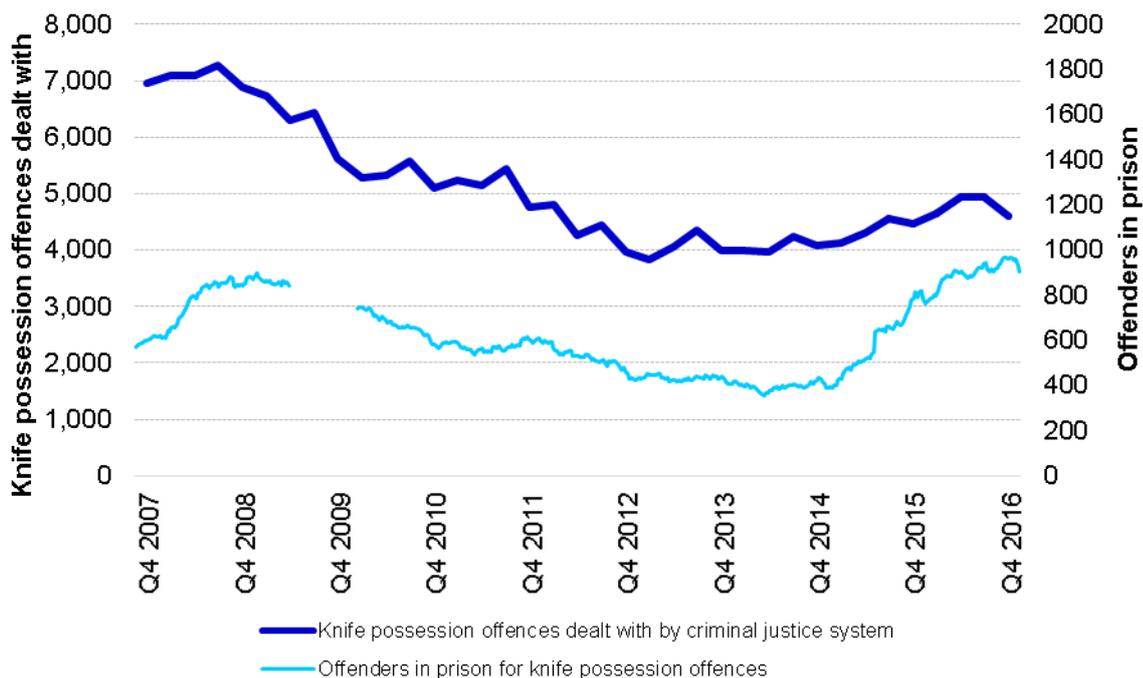
¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/knife-possession-sentencing-quarterly>

1. Knife possession offences and prison population

4,602 knife possession offences were formally dealt with by the criminal justice system in Q4 2016

The number of knife possession offences dealt with by the criminal justice system (CJS) has risen by 3% since Q4 2015.

Figure 1: Knife possession offences resulting in a caution or sentence, and prison population under sentence for a knife possession offence², England and Wales, Q4 2007 – Q4 2016 (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 criminal justice system, corresponding with a decline in the number of knife possession offenders in prison.

Since Q4 2014, 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 observation can be explained at least in part by the fact that the proportion of offenders being sentenced to immediate custody has increased from 29% to 34% during this period, whilst their average sentence length rose from 7.2 to 7.7 months. Thus although the number of offenders dealt with has increased only slightly, more of these offenders are going to prison, and are staying there for longer.

² Includes articles with a blade or point. Knife possession figures for last four quarters are estimates – see accompanying technical guidance for details.

2. Cautions vs. Custodial sentences

41% of adult offenders and 11% of juvenile offenders were given an immediate custodial sentence

This represents an increase of 14 percentage points for adult offenders and 1 percentage point for juvenile offenders since Q4 2008

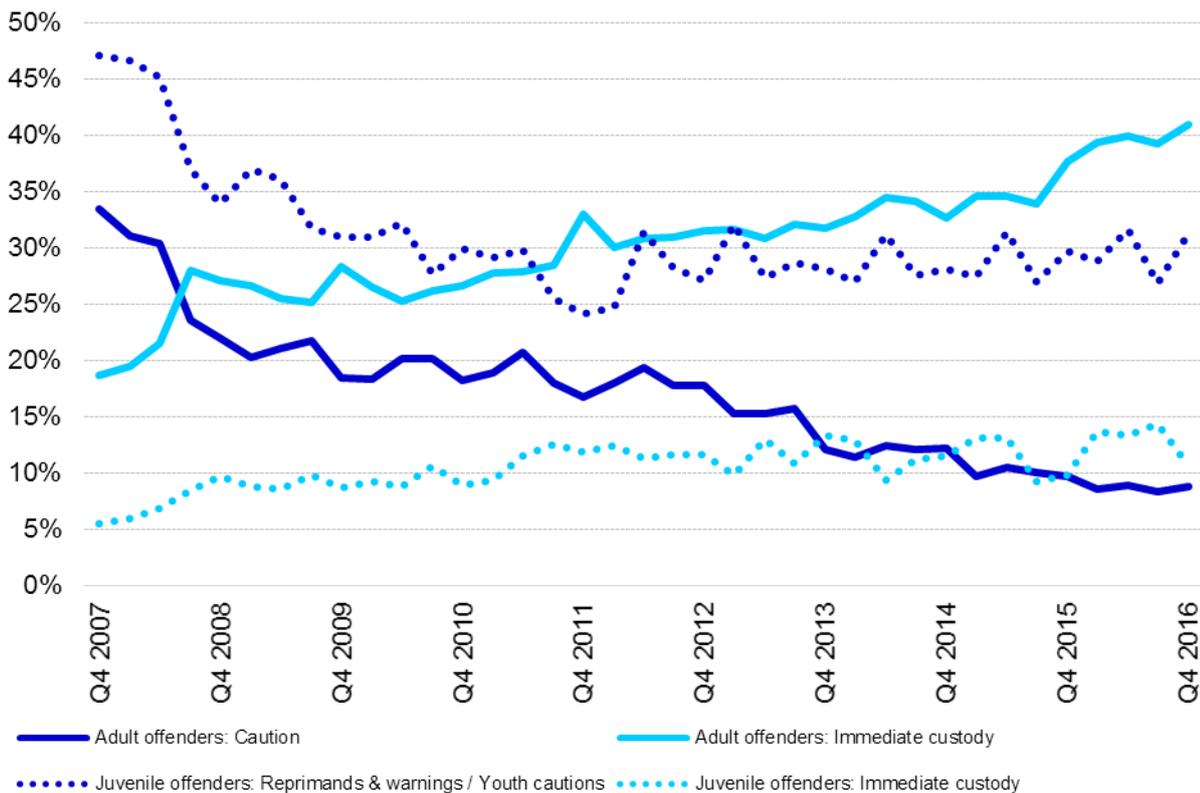
9% of adult offenders and 31% of juvenile offenders received a caution

These figures have fallen by 13 percentage points for adult offenders and 3 percentage points for juvenile offenders since Q4 2008

The average custodial sentence length was 7.7 months

For those sentenced to immediate custody, the average custodial sentence length for knife possession offences has risen by 1.9 months (33%) since Q4 2008

Figure 2: Proportion of adult and juvenile offenders given cautions or immediate custodial sentences for knife possession offences in England and Wales, 2008 – 2016 (Source: Table 2)



The most common disposal for a knife possession offence continues to be immediate custody (34%) followed by community sentence (23%) and suspended sentence (19%).

A quarter (25%) of all knife possession offences in the year ending December 2016 resulting in a caution or conviction were prosecuted by the Metropolitan Police.

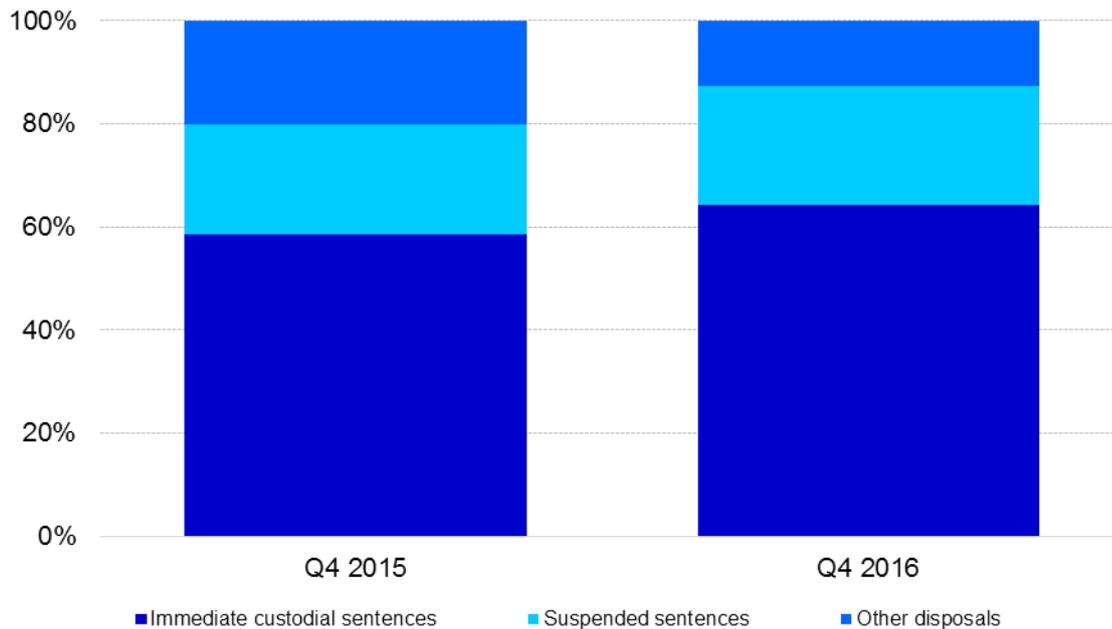
In 2016, the region with the largest number of knife possession offenders was the Metropolitan Police Force area, where 63 people per 100,000 of the population were dealt with by the CJS for knife possession offences. The region where knife possession offenders were least common was Surrey Police Force area, with a rate of 15 per 100,000.

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

64% of adult repeat offenders received an immediate custodial sentence

This figure increased by 5 percentage points when compared to the same quarter in the previous year for offenders convicted under the new minimum sentencing legislation³.

Figure 3: Adult repeat offenders dealt with by the criminal justice system, by disposal type, in Q4 2015 and Q4 2016



The number of repeat knife possession sentencing occasions increased from 652 in Q4 2015 to an estimated 974 cases Q4 2016.

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

Of the 974 occasions, 908 were adults, 64% of whom received immediate custodial sentences – an increase of 5 percentage points on Q4 2015. An additional 23% received a suspended sentence order.

The remaining 66 cases in Q4 2016 were 16-17 year-olds; 61% received an immediate custodial sentence and 36% received a community sentence.

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 (91% 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 <http://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.

Accompanying files

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

- 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
- 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.

<https://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

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<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/knife-possession-sentencing-quarterly>

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