



Knife Possession Sentencing Quarterly, England and Wales – April to June 2017

Main points

5,237 knife possession offences dealt with by the CJS



A rise of 6% since Q2 2016. This increase has been driven by the increase in blade or point offences.

42% of adult offenders were given an immediate custodial sentence



This was the highest rate for adults since this publication series began, almost a decade ago.

7% of adult offenders and 29% of juvenile offenders received a caution



These figures have fallen by 23 percentage points for adult offenders and 16 percentage points for juvenile offenders since Q2 2008.

The average custodial sentence length was 7.6 months



This has risen by 3.1 months since Q2 2008. With 38% now sentenced to more than 6 months compared to 15% in Q2 2008.

87% of adult repeat offenders received a custodial sentence



This figure has increased by 4 percentage points when compared to Q2 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. Knife possession offences in this publication include offences involving the possession of a blade, point or offensive weapon and offences involving threatening with one of these types of weapon. It should be noted that figures for the latest quarter (April to June) 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

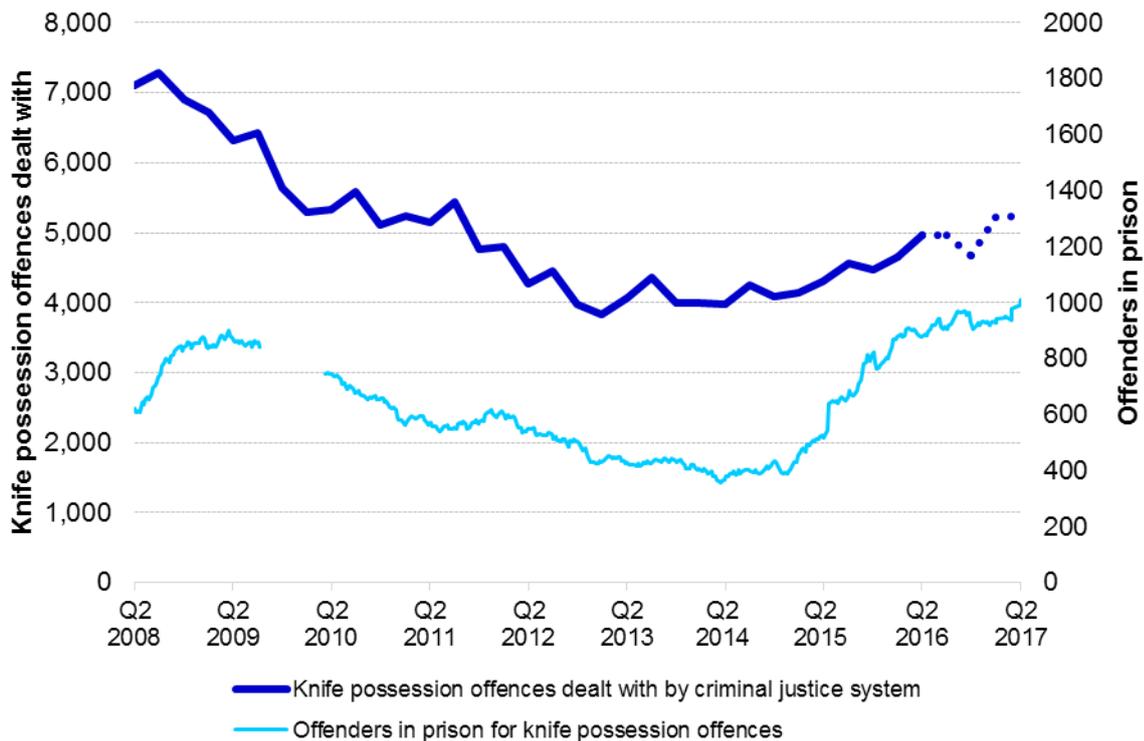
¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/knife-possession-sentencing-quarterly>

1. Knife possession offences overview

5,237 knife possession offences were formally dealt with by the Criminal Justice System (CJS) in Q2 2017

The number of knife possession offences dealt with by the CJS has risen by 6% since Q2 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, Q2 2008 – Q2 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 2008 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 Q2 2014, both of these trends have reversed. However, the number of offenders in prison for knife possession offences has risen 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 30% to 36% 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 Knife possession figures for last four quarters are estimates and denoted with a dotted line – see the technical document for more details.

2. Cautions vs. Custodial sentences

42% 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 6 percentage points for juvenile offenders since Q2 2008. This is the highest rate for adults since Q4 2007.

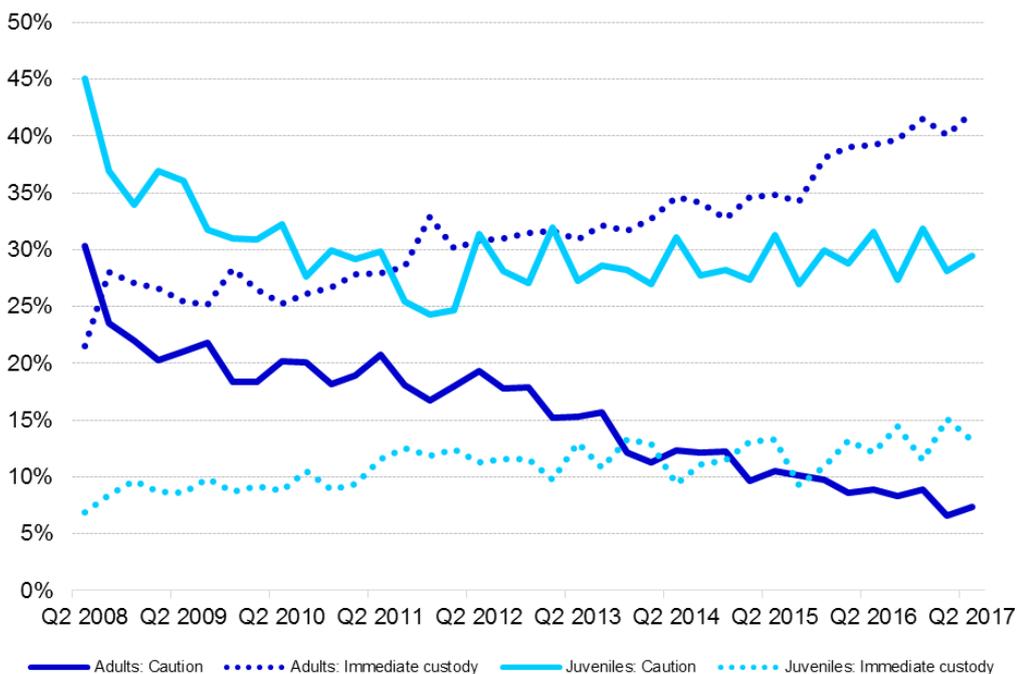
7% of adult offenders and 29% of juvenile offenders received a caution

These figures have fallen by 23 percentage points for adult offenders and 16 percentage points for juvenile offenders since Q2 2008.

The average custodial sentence length was 7.6 months

This has risen by 3.1 months since Q2 2008. With 38% now sentenced to more than 6 months compared to 15% in Q2 2008.

Figure 2: Proportion of adult and juvenile offenders given cautions or immediate custodial sentences for knife possession offences in England and Wales, Q2 2008 to Q2 2017 (Source: Table 2)



The most common disposal for a knife possession offence received by adults continues to be immediate custody (42%) followed by suspended sentence (25%) and community sentence (15%). For juveniles the most common disposals were community sentence (51%), caution (29%) and immediate custody (13%).

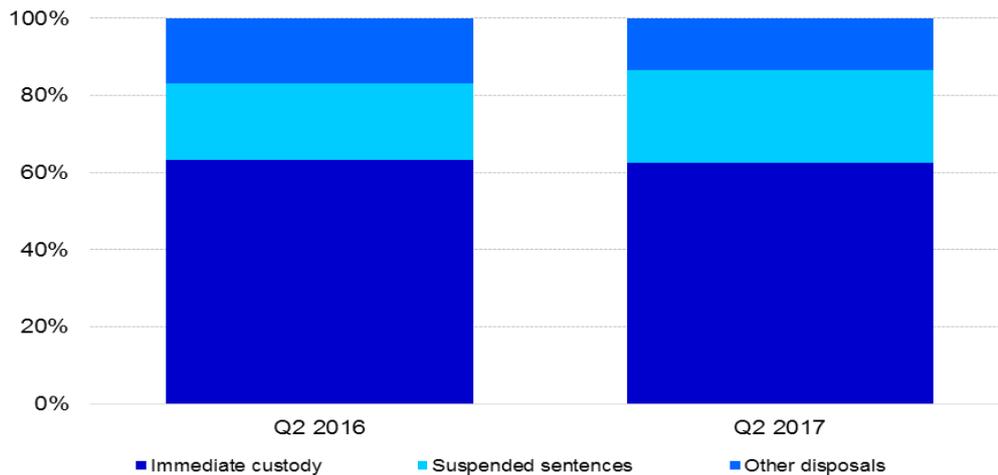
Of sentencing occasions in the year ending June 2017 involving a knife possession offence, 72% had no previous possession offences involving a blade, point or offensive weapon. This has fallen 8 percentage points since the year ending June 2009 (80%).

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

87% of adult repeat offenders received some form of custodial sentence³

This figure increased by 4 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 2015⁴.

Figure 3: Adult repeat offenders dealt with by the criminal justice system, by disposal type, in Q2 2016 and Q2 2017



7,136 repeat knife possession sentencing or cautioning occasions have been identified under this act since it was introduced in July 2015. There has been an increase in the number of cases from 969 in Q2 2016 to an estimated 1,147 in Q2 2017.

Of the 1,147 occasions, 1,036 were adults, 63% of whom received immediate custodial sentences which has remained the same as Q2 2016. An additional 24% received a suspended sentence order, this has increased 4 percentage points since Q2 2016.

For those adults receiving immediate custody the average sentence length in Q2 2017 was 7.6 months, this was 6.4 months for 16 and 17 year olds.

The remaining 111 occasions were 16 and 17 year olds; 46% received an immediate custodial sentence and 51% received a community sentence. The proportion receiving a community sentence has gone up by 6 percentage points since Q2 2016, and up by 3 percentage points over the same period for immediate custody.

The proportion of 16 to 17 year olds getting a community sentence is higher than that of adults because this form of non-custodial sentence may be given where the young offender pleads guilty⁵.

³ A custodial sentence includes immediate custody and suspended sentence order

⁴ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/2/part/1/crossheading/repeat-offences-involving-offensive-weapons-etc>

⁵ 90% 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

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

<https://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:

- Excel tables containing data on knife possession offences up to Q2 2017
- A Sankey diagram looking at outcomes of those offenders sentenced for knife possession offences. The diagram provides further breakdowns by gender and offence type.

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/>

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