








Knife Possession Sentencing Quarterly, England and Wales – July to September 2017

Main points

5,324 knife possession offences dealt with by the CJS 	A rise of 7% since Q3 2016. This increase has been driven by the increase in blade or point offences.
Offenders cautioned or convicted of a knife possession offence are now more likely to receive some form of custody 	55% of offenders received some form of custody i.e. immediate custody or suspended sentence, when convicted or cautioned of knife possession offence. An increase from 27% in the year ending September 2008.
6% of adult offences received a caution 	This was the lowest rate for adults since this publication series began, almost a decade ago.
The average custodial sentence length was 7.7 months 	This has risen by 2.1 months since Q3 2008. With 40% now sentenced to more than 6 months compared to 22% in Q3 2008.
88% of adult repeat offenders received a custodial sentence 	This figure has increased by 5 percentage points when compared to Q3 2016 for offenders convicted under section 28 of the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015.

Presented are key statistics describing the trends in the number of offenders receiving cautions and convictions 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 (July to September) are provisional.

For the first time this publication is supported an interactive table tool. The tool provides further breakdowns including gender and ethnicity. Additionally, an informal consultation regarding proposed changes has been launched and can be found on page 5.

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. Knife possession offences overview

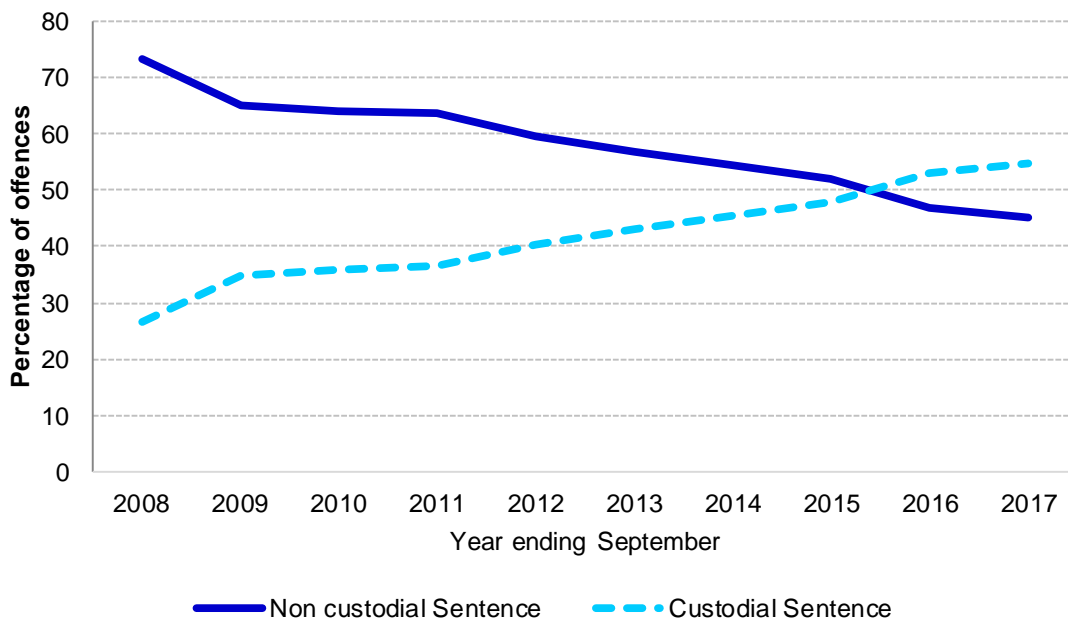
5,324 knife possession offences were formally dealt with by the Criminal Justice System (CJS) in Q3 2017

The number of knife possession offences dealt with by the CJS has risen by 7% since Q3 2016. This change has been driven by the increase in the number of blade or point possession offences.

Offenders cautioned or convicted of a knife possession offence are now more likely to receive some form of custody

55% of offenders received some form of custody i.e. immediate custody or suspended sentence, when convicted or cautioned of knife possession offence. An increase from 27% in the year ending September 2008.

Figure 1: Knife possession offences resulting in a caution or conviction by outcome, England and Wales, year ending September 2008 to year ending September 2017 (Source: Table 1)



Over time the proportion of offences resulting in an immediate custodial sentence has increased; in Q3 2017 it was 37% compared to just 23% in the same period in 2008. The average custodial sentence length also increased over this period from 5.6 months in Q3 2008 to 7.7 months in Q3 2017.

2. Cautions vs. Custodial sentences

43% of adult offences and 12% of juvenile offences were given an immediate custodial sentence

This represents an increase of 15 percentage points for adult offences and 4 percentage points for juvenile offenders since Q3 2008. This is the highest rate for adults since the time series began in Q4 2007.

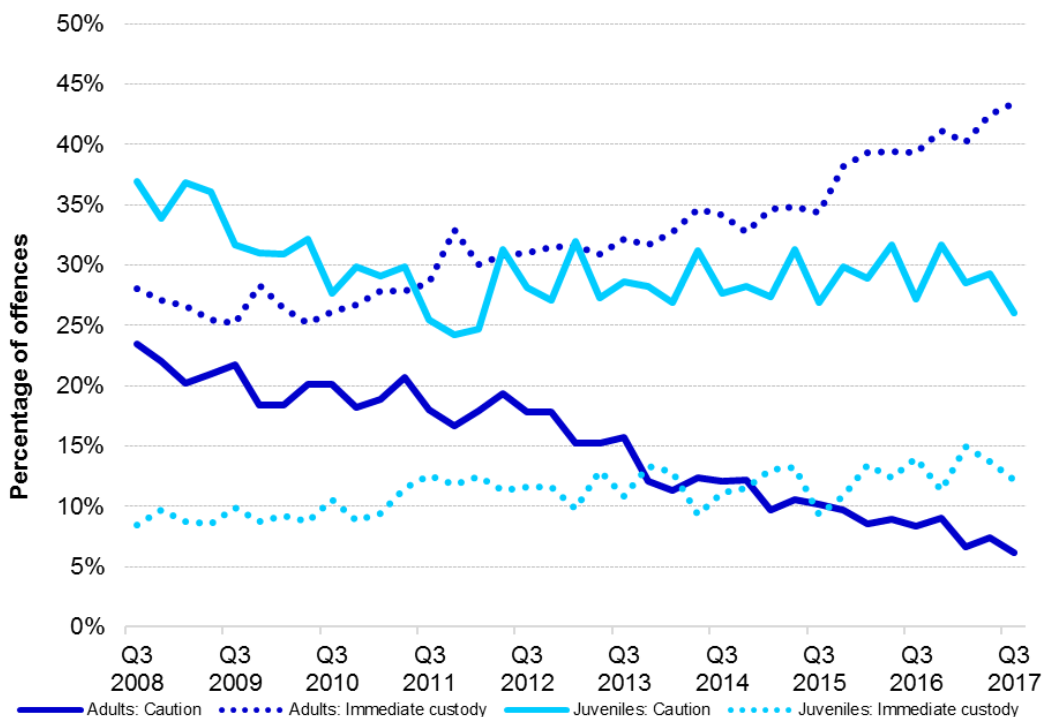
6% of adult offences and 26% of juvenile offences received a caution

These figures have fallen by 18 percentage points for adult offences and 11 percentage points for juvenile offences since Q3 2008. This is the lowest rate for adults since the time series began in Q4 2007.

The average custodial sentence length was 7.7 months

This has risen by 2.1 months since Q3 2008. With 40% now sentenced to more than 6 months compared to 22% in Q3 2008.

Figure 2: Proportion of adult and juvenile offenders given cautions or immediate custodial sentences for knife possession offences in England and Wales, Q3 2008 to Q3 2017 (Source: Table 2)



The most common disposal for a knife possession offence received by adults continues to be immediate custody (43%) followed by suspended sentence (25%) and community sentence (15%). For juveniles, the most common disposals were community sentence (55%), caution (26%) and immediate custody (12%).

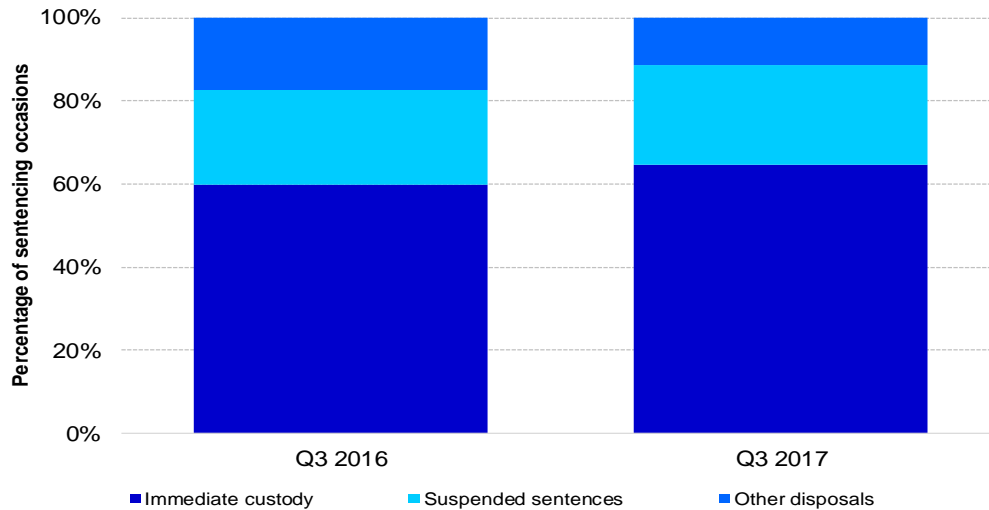
Of sentencing occasions in the year ending September 2017 involving a knife possession offence, 72% had no previous possession offences involving a blade, point or offensive weapon. This has fallen 8 percentage points since the year ending September 2008 (80%).

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

88% of adult repeat offenders received a custodial sentence

This figure has increased by 5 percentage points when compared to Q3 2016 for offenders convicted under section 28 of the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015¹.

Figure 3: Repeat knife possession sentencing or cautioning occasions involving an adult offender, by disposal type, in Q3 2016 and Q3 2017 (Source: Table 5)



8,327 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 1,094 in Q3 2016 to an estimated 1,195 in Q3 2017.

Of the 1,195 occasions, 1,103 involved an adult offender, 65% of which resulted in immediate custodial sentence which has increased by 5 percentage points since Q3 2016. An additional 24% received a suspended sentence order, which has increased by 1 percentage points since Q3 2016.

For those adults receiving immediate custody the average sentence length in Q3 2017 was 7.6 months, and was 6.8 months for 16 and 17 year olds.

The remaining 92 occasions involved offenders who were aged 16 or 17; 41% resulted in an immediate custodial sentence and 50% resulted in a community sentence. The proportion receiving a community sentence has gone up by 2 percentage points since Q3 2016, and down by 6 percentage points over the same period for immediate custody.

The proportion of 16 to 17 year olds receiving a community sentence is higher than that of adults because this form of non-custodial sentence may be given where the young offender pleads guilty².

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

² 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

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 Q3 2017
- An interactive table tool to look at previous offences involving possession of a blade, point or offensive weapon. The tool provides further breakdowns by gender and police identified ethnicity.
- 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/>

Changes to future bulletins

From March 2018, it is intended to expand this publication to include: details around plea; other offences dealt with at the same time as knife possession offences; information on the number of offenders; number of offences committed in the period; and the number of times an individual is formerly dealt with at court or cautioned i.e. sentencing occasions. The publication will also be renamed to 'Knife and Offensive Weapon Sentencing Statistics', to better reflect the coverage of the offences included.

We would welcome any feedback on the inclusion of this additional information and change in publication name. Please send any response by 19th January 2018 to statistics.enquiries@justice.gsi.gov.uk

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: 8 March 2018

<https://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