

## Statistical Bulletin

### Sale of knives etc to persons under 18

#### Introduction

This bulletin provides information on volumes and sentence outcomes for adult offenders<sup>1</sup> and organisations sentenced for the single offence covered by the Sentencing Council's draft guidelines for underage sale of knives etc. There are two draft guidelines covering this offence, one for individuals and another for organisations:

- Individuals: Sale of knives and certain articles with blade or point to persons under 18, Criminal Justice Act 1988, (section 141A); and
- Organisations: Sale of knives and certain articles with blade or point to persons under 18, Criminal Justice Act 1988, (section 141A).

The Court Proceedings Database (CPD), maintained by the Ministry of Justice, is the data source for this bulletin.<sup>2</sup>

Additional figures for this offence, including breakdowns by demographic groups (sex, age group and ethnicity), can be found in the data tables which are available to download as Excel spreadsheets or Open Document spreadsheets at the following link:

<http://www.sentencingcouncil.org.uk/publications/?type=publications&s&cat=statistical-bulletin>.

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<sup>1</sup> Offenders aged 18 or over at the time of conviction.

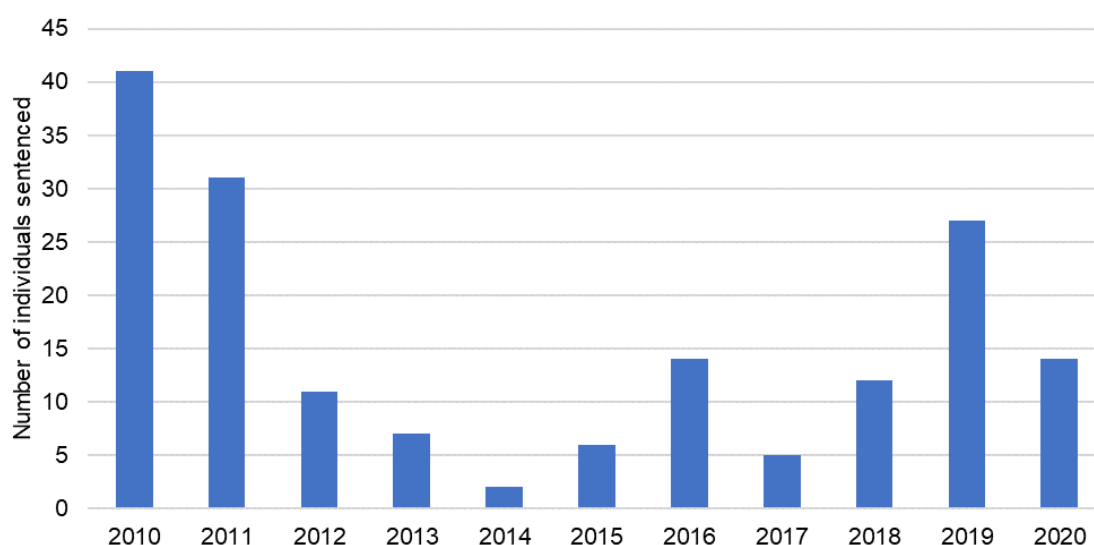
<sup>2</sup> Figures presented for 2020 include the time period since March 2020 in which restrictions were placed on the criminal justice system due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It is therefore possible that these figures may reflect the impact of the pandemic on court processes and prioritisation and the subsequent recovery, rather than a continuation of the longer-term series, so care should be taken when interpreting these figures.

## Individuals

### Sentence volumes

Volumes of individuals sentenced for the underage sale of knives etc declined from 2010 to 2014, but have broadly increased since (see figure 1). Underage sale of knives etc is a low volume offence, with around 70 individuals sentenced between 2016 and 2020.<sup>3</sup>

**Figure 1: Number of adult individuals sentenced for the offence of underage sale of knives etc, 2010-2020**



### Sentence outcomes

Since 2010 fines were the most common sentence outcome for individuals for this offence. Between 2016 and 2020,<sup>3</sup> three quarters (75 per cent) of adult offenders sentenced received a fine and 15 per cent received an absolute or conditional discharge. A further 6 per cent received a community order, 3 per cent received a suspended sentence and the remaining 1 per cent were 'otherwise dealt with'.<sup>4</sup>

The statutory maximum sentence for individuals for the offence of underage sale of knives etc is six months' custody, but no immediate custodial sentences were imposed between 2010 and 2020.

<sup>3</sup> Due to the small number of offenders sentenced for this offence, 5 years of data have been presented.

<sup>4</sup> 'Otherwise dealt with' covers miscellaneous disposals. Please note that due to a data issue currently under investigation, there are a number of cases which are incorrectly categorised in the Court Proceedings Database (CPD) as 'Otherwise dealt with'. Therefore, these volumes and proportions should be treated with caution.

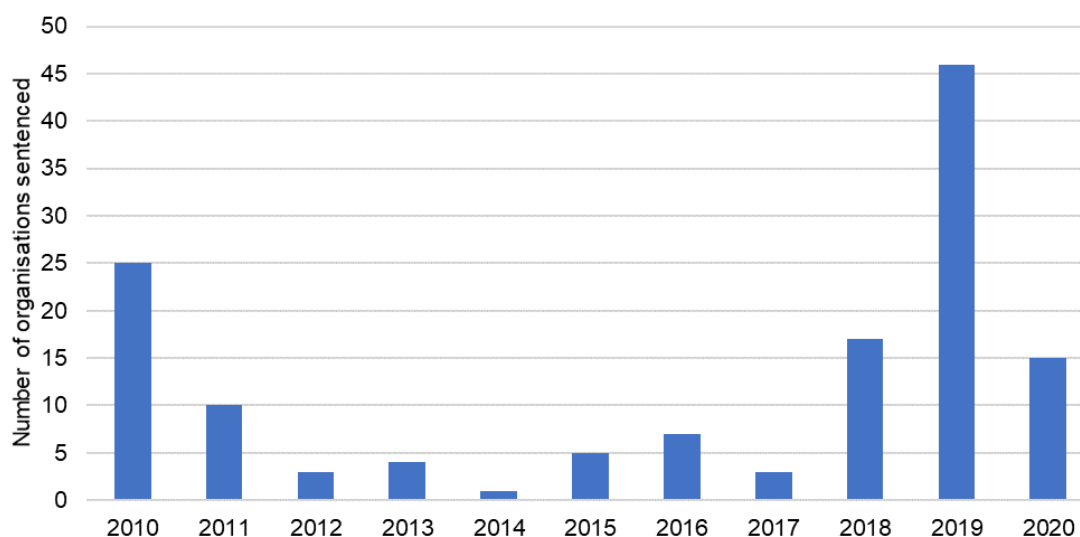
For adult offenders who received a fine between 2016 and 2020<sup>3</sup>, the average (median) fine value was £308<sup>5</sup> and fine values ranged between £34 and £6,000.<sup>6</sup> Of the adult offenders sentenced between 2016 and 2020, nearly three quarters (74 per cent) received a fine of £500 or less.

## Organisations

### Sentence volumes

As with individuals sentenced for this offence, the number of organisations sentenced for the underage sale of knives etc is low. Across 2016 to 2020,<sup>3</sup> around 90 organisations were sentenced for the offence of underage sale of knives etc (see figure 2).

**Figure 2: Number of organisations sentenced for the offence of underage sale of knives etc, 2010-2020**



### Sentence outcomes

The sentence outcomes for the underage sale of knives etc for organisations are limited only to absolute or conditional discharges, or fines. Organisations cannot receive a community order, a suspended sentence or immediate custody.

Similar to individual sentence outcomes, fines were the most common outcome for organisations this offence for the years 2010 to 2020. Between 2016 and 2020,<sup>3</sup> nearly all (99 per cent) of organisations sentenced for this offence received a fine. The remaining 1 per cent received an absolute or conditional discharge.

<sup>5</sup> The median is calculated by ordering all the fine values (from lowest to highest, or highest to lowest) and choosing the middle value. The median is less sensitive to extreme values. The mean fine value is calculated by adding up all of the fines values and dividing the total by the number of offenders sentenced to a fine. The mean fine value from 2016 to 2020 was £582 for individuals and £10,264 for organisations.

<sup>6</sup> Note that these figures are based on the fine imposed for the principal offence only. Any fines imposed for secondary (other) offences have not been included in these analyses.

Across 2016 to 2020,<sup>3</sup> organisations received an average (median) fine value of £2,500<sup>5</sup> and fine values ranged between £150 and £200,000.<sup>6</sup> Of the organisations sentenced between 2016 and 2020, nearly half (49 per cent) received a fine of £2,000 or less.

## Further information

### Volumes of sentences

The data presented in this bulletin only include cases where the offence detailed was the principal offence committed. When an offender has been found guilty of two or more offences, the principal offence is the offence for which the heaviest penalty is imposed. Where the same disposal is imposed for two or more offences, the offence selected is the offence for which the statutory maximum penalty is the most severe. Although the offender will receive a sentence for each of the offences that they are convicted of, it is only the sentence for the principal offence that is presented in this bulletin.

### Sentence outcomes

The outcomes presented are the final sentence outcomes, after taking into account all factors of the case, including whether a guilty plea was made. This is because the sentence length information available in the Court Proceedings Database is the final sentence imposed, after any reduction for guilty plea. Sentence outcomes presented in this bulletin are therefore not directly comparable to outcomes referred to in sentencing guideline tables which are instead based on pre-guilty plea sentences.

### General conventions

Actual numbers of sentences have been rounded to the nearest 100, when more than 1,000 offenders were sentenced, and to the nearest 10 when fewer than 1,000 offenders were sentenced.

### Data sources and quality

The source of data for this bulletin is the Court Proceedings Database (CPD), which is maintained by the Ministry of Justice (MoJ). Every effort is made by MoJ and the Sentencing Council to ensure that the figures presented in this publication are accurate and complete. However, it is important to note that these data have been extracted from large administrative data systems generated by the courts and police forces. As a consequence, care should be taken to ensure data collection processes and their inevitable limitations are taken into account when those data are used.

Further details of the processes by which MoJ validate the records in the CPD can be found within the guide to their Criminal Justice Statistics publication which can be downloaded via the link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/criminal-justice-statistics>

**Contact points for further information**

We would be very pleased to hear your views on our statistical bulletins. If you have any feedback or comments, please send them to:

[research@sentencingcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:research@sentencingcouncil.gov.uk)

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Further information on the Sentencing Council and its work can be found at:

<http://www.sentencingcouncil.org.uk/>