

## **Gun and knife enabled crime in London**

### **What is gun and knife crime?**

The police record crime into different offence categories, e.g. robbery. If a weapon is used to assist a crime the offence will also be classified as a gun or knife enabled offence, e.g. a knife enabled robbery.

Owning or carrying an illegal gun or knife is an offence in its own right, even if it hasn't been used to carry out a crime.

### **Are crimes involving guns and knives common?**

Gun and knife enabled offences are uncommon. In London during 2004/05, only 2 percent of all recorded violent crime involved a gun and 5 percent involved a knife.

This said, in 2003/04 more gun-enabled crimes were recorded in London than any other region in England and Wales: around 40 percent of the national total<sup>1</sup>. This may seem a large figure but it equates to around 6 offences per 10,000 Londoners per year.

*Source: MPS recorded crime and Povey, D (2004) Home Office*

### **Is gun and knife crime increasing?**

Long term crime trends between April 2003 and August 2005 show consistent levels of gun and knife enabled offending in London. Monthly fluctuations occur but the number of offences have not increased or decreased significantly over this period.

Recent trends, comparing the July to September quarter for 2004/05 with that of 2005/06, indicate that there have been increases in gun-enabled violence (14 percent) and also increases for gun enabled homicide and knife enabled homicide (4 more offences for each compared to period in the previous year).

*Source: MPS recorded crime*

### **What types of crime involve guns and knives?**

It is important to note that crimes involving guns and knives do not always result in physical injury; guns and knives are also used to threaten, and damage property.

The following tables list the types of gun and knife enabled crime in order of prevalence.

| Gun enabled offence         | Percentage |
|-----------------------------|------------|
| Criminal damage             | 46         |
| Violence against the person | 30         |
| Robbery                     | 20         |
| 'Other notifiable' offences | 3          |
| Burglary                    | 2          |

---

<sup>1</sup> There are also large concentrations of gun crime in Greater Manchester and the West Midlands metropolitan areas.

| Knife enabled offence         | Percentage |
|-------------------------------|------------|
| Robbery                       | 29         |
| Violence                      | 29         |
| Illegal possession of a knife | 25         |
| Criminal damage               | 4          |
| Theft and handling            | 4          |
| 'Other notifiable' offences   | 4          |
| Burglary                      | 3          |
| Drugs                         | 1          |

Source: Metropolitan Police Authority (2005, Report 10)

### **What types of weapons are used to commit crimes?**

The following table list the types of guns used to commit crimes in order of prevalence for England and Wales.

| Gun type                | Percentage of gun enabled crime |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Air weapon              | 57                              |
| Hand gun                | 23                              |
| Imitation               | 8                               |
| Unidentified            | 6                               |
| Other firearm           | 3                               |
| Long barrelled shot gun | 1                               |
| Sawn off shot gun       | 1                               |
| Rifle                   | 0                               |

Source: Home Office 01/04 (2004)

Different types of blades and sharp implements can be used to threaten and attack people although the statistics here relate to incidents involving actual knives.

### **To what extent are victims of gun and knife crime harmed or killed?**

Victims of any crime suffer a certain amount of trauma. The involvement of a weapon is likely to increase the severity of an offence and also increase the risk of serious physical harm.

A threatening situation involving a weapon can escalate quickly and become violent. Weapons increase the likelihood of someone being killed, be it the intended victim or the attacker themselves.

The probability of serious injury is four and a half times greater when a knife is used to assist a crime. The risk of serious injury is more than twice as great for knife-enabled crimes than for gun-enabled crimes.

It is important to consider these statistics in context however: gun and knife enabled homicide is very rare and accounts around 1 percent of gun and knife enabled violence each year.

Source: MPS recorded crime and MPA report 10

### **Who is committing gun and knife crime?**

In the three months to September 2005, those legally proceeded against for a gun or knife enabled crime tended to be male (90 percent), predominantly aged between 18 and 25 (53 percent) and were mostly either Black (47 percent) or White (38 percent).

Those aged between 10 and 17 accounted for over a quarter of those accused (28 percent).

*Source: MPS recorded crime*

### **Which areas in London have highest levels of gun and knife crime?**

Generally neighbourhoods with high levels of deprivation and social exclusion have the highest rates of gun and knife crime.

The following table indicates which London boroughs have the highest and lowest level of gun enabled offending when taking different population sizes in to account.

| Borough list  | Rate of gun offences per 10,000 population |
|---|--|
| Hackney, Lambeth, Southwark   | 10 - 12                                    |
| Haringey, Waltham Forest, Lewisham, Brent   | 8-9  |
| Tower Hamlets, Newham, Islington, Greenwich, Ealing, Barking & Dagenham                 | 5-7  |
| Hammersmith & Fulham, Enfield, Camden, Wandsworth, Redbridge, Croydon, Merton, Hounslow | 4  |
| Havering, Westminster, Barnet, Kensington & Chelsea, Kingston, Hillingdon               | 3  |
| Bromley, Harrow, Sutton, Bexley, Richmond   | 1-2  |

*Source: MPS recorded crime 12months Oct 2005*