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Alarming Surge in Knife Crime Sparks Calls for Tougher Sentencing in London

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— Categories: Crime



Knife crime in London has soared by nearly 60 per cent in just three years, according to a new report, prompting fresh calls for a tougher stance on violent offenders and greater support for frontline policing.

The report, commissioned by think tank Policy Exchange, revealed a 58.5 per cent increase in knife-related offences across the capital between 2021 and 2024. Researchers found that the problem remains highly concentrated, with just 20 streets in London's West End accounting for more incidents than 15 per cent of the rest of the city combined.

The findings paint a bleak picture of justice outcomes in the capital. Last year, only one in 20 robbery cases was solved, while for theft from a person, such as pickpocketing or phone snatching, just one in every 170 crimes resulted in a resolution. The figures raise concerns over public safety and the current effectiveness of the Metropolitan Police and wider criminal justice system.

Shadow Home Secretary Chris Philp responded by backing the report's main recommendation: "The 'zero-tolerance' approach advocated within this report is one that I support; it will closely inform my policy thinking in this area."

The report criticises what it calls a "dangerously lax approach" to dealing with repeat offenders. It highlights how individuals classed as "hyper-prolific", those with 46 or more previous convictions, were imprisoned in less than half of their latest convictions for indictable or either-way offences. In 2024 alone, this meant 4,555 offenders with significant criminal histories avoided a custodial sentence.

Similarly, "super-prolific" offenders, defined as those with 26 to 45 previous convictions, were given prison time in only 42.1 per cent of cases. The report also raised the alarm over weak enforcement of mandatory sentencing for repeat knife possession, with more than a third of these offenders avoiding immediate imprisonment.

Margaret Mullane, Labour Member of Parliament (MP) for Dagenham and Rainham, did not mince her words in response. "London is in the grip of a public safety crisis," she said. "Robbery, knife attacks, and phone thefts have become routine, yet while street crime surges, the criminal justice system has faltered. This hard-hitting report from Policy Exchange exposes the problem's scale and clearly sets out where things must change. Every Londoner deserves to feel safe, and this report shows how we get there."

The study also points to a serious strain on the courts and prison system. Former Metropolitan Police Inspector and Labour MP for Pendle and Clitheroe, Jonathan Hinder, said: "Our criminal justice system has been left utterly broken, and we urgently need to properly resource our courts and prisons if we are to restore public faith that justice is being done."

He added: "In the meantime, the law-abiding public wants a strong police force to have the confidence to take on criminals, and it's time for politicians of all colours to give the police their full backing to do just that."

Policy Exchange's analysis warns that unless immediate action is taken to support police and restore sentencing integrity, knife crime will continue to spiral. The capital's rising levels of unsolved crime and lenient penalties for prolific offenders have triggered growing concern among policymakers and residents.

While the current Labour-led London administration has been criticised in some quarters for its approach to law enforcement, the report avoids directly assigning blame to one party. However, it underscores the urgent need for political will, cross-party cooperation, and proper investment in public safety.