



Written by [Steve Byas](#) on April 3, 2018

## London's Rising Murder Rate Raises Questions About Gun Control

Since the 1997 handgun ban in England and Wales, there has been only one year in which the homicide rate has been lower than it was in the year before the ban. Now London has made history: In both February and March, there were more murders in London than in New York City. In February, there were 15 murders in London, and 14 in New York City. In March there were 22 killings in London, and 21 in New York City. Twelve individuals were killed in London in only 19 days.



In places that ban guns, murder rates have tended to rise, and in England the murder rate has shot up 50 percent since the ban. London's murder rate has grown nearly 40 percent in only three years.

While murder rates with firearms nearly doubled between 1996 and 2002 in London, what has been particularly noteworthy is the increase in killings with knives. Just last year, there were 80 fatal stabbings in London alone. The number of Londoners under age 25 who have been stabbed to death was up 21 percent in one year, police say. In March in east London, a Romanian immigrant was chased and stabbed to death by a knife-wielding gang of murderers at the shopping area called Stratford Centre. Such tragedies are becoming far too common in London, and also other English cities as well.

All of this has led to "knife control" efforts, with Sean Yates of Scotland Yard actually heading up a unit to fight knife crime. He blames the courts for failing to enforce a law in which those "caught" with a knife more than once face jail time. London and other English cities have resorted to "stop and search" tactics in an effort to get knives off the streets, and thereby hopefully reduce the number of murders.

Why have so many younger Londoners resorted to carrying knives with them, as a matter of course? Jacob Whittingham, with the Fight for Peace, told the *Sunday Times*, "With young people in London, you have no idea if and when you may be the victim of a violent crime — that's why they feel the need to carry weapons."

The reason they *feel* the need to carry a weapon is there *is* a need. Criminals know that since the gun ban, there has been a greatly reduced chance of a law-abiding person being able to fight back with a gun.

As Americans are locked in debates over the value of increased gun control laws (and even some, such as former Associate Justice John Paul Stevens, favoring outright repeal of the Second Amendment), one would think that what has happened in the U.K. would illustrate the futility of focusing on laws restricting the rights of law-abiding Americans. Some favoring gun control like to point to the low murder rate in countries such as Japan, that also has few guns possessed by the general population.

But those who argue that this means that more restrictive gun laws, or even an outright ban on private gun ownership, would somehow reduce the murder rate should also compare the United States to



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Switzerland. Although there are millions of firearms in private hands in the United States (with only a tiny fraction ever being used to hurt anyone), a much larger percentage of private citizens in Switzerland possess firearms. Yet the rate of violent crime in Switzerland is only a fraction of that found in America.

In the United States, the number of murders with firearms is 32.57 per million of the population. But in Switzerland, the figure is much lower, at only 9.33 per million of the population.

The English are attempting to deal with rising knife killings with knife-control laws and increased police presence, yet it does not appear to be working. Here again, a comparison with Switzerland should provide both Americans and the British a perspective that increased controls on the population is not the answer. After all, while there are 243.6 police officers per 100,000 in the United States, the Swiss get by with 0.9 police officers per 100,000. As important as police are, they cannot be everywhere (nor would we want them to be). As the old saying goes, "When seconds count, police are minutes away."

Perhaps the lesson is that an armed populace, with a reasonable number of police officers, is a better answer than taking weapons (guns or knives) out of the hands of those citizens who have them for the purpose of defense. Even the Met police commissioner in London, Cressida Dick, who calls the rising murder rate in the capital city "shocking," said, "We will not police our way out of this problem."

If more gun-control laws and increased police presence could seriously curtail murder, then Chicago would be one of America's safest cities.

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