

Written evidence submitted to the Crime and Policing Bill by Dr. E. Cook and Professor S. Walklate submitted March 26th 2025.

1. Who we are.

Professor Sandra Walklate (B.A.; M.Litt., FAcSS) is currently Eleanor Rathbone Chair of Sociology (University of Liverpool), an adjunct professor at QUT in Brisbane, a Research Associate at the University of West Virginia Center for Violence Research and a member of the Advisory Board of the Observatory Permanent Violence and Crime (OPVC), Portugal. Internationally recognised for her work in victimology and violence against women her recent work includes *The criminalization of violence against women 2024* (edited with H. Douglas, K. Fitz-Gibbon and L. Goodmark) Oxford University Press and *What is to be done about violence against women? Gendered Violence(s) in the 21st Century 2023* (with Kate Fitz-Gibbon) London: Routledge.

Dr Elizabeth Cook is a Senior Lecturer in Criminology and Sociology in the Violence and Society Centre, City St George's, University of London. Her areas of research expertise include domestic homicide, femicide, family, and gender. She is a Co-Investigator on VISION [MR/V049879/1], a UKRI-funded Prevention Research Partnership Consortium on violence and health inequalities, and a British Academy/Leverhulme Small Grant on *Improving the Commissioning of Domestic Homicide Reviews in England and Wales*. She is also a Member of the Peer Review College of the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) and the Editorial Board of *Sociology*.

2. Section 12: Power to seize bladed articles.

12. Power to seize bladed articles etc

A constable who—

is lawfully on any premises,

finds, on the premises, an article which has a blade or is sharply pointed (a “relevant article”), and

has reasonable grounds for suspecting that the relevant article would be likely to be used in connection with unlawful violence (if it were not seized),

may seize the relevant article.

The response below was prompted by Section 12 in this proposed legislation (see box above). Currently, there are several problematic assumptions in this Section.

1. What is a bladed article?
2. What is understood by premises?
3. What are reasonable grounds for suspecting that the relevant article would be likely to be used in connection with unlawful violence (if it were not seized)?

This Section raises questions regarding, firstly, how ‘knife crime’ is defined and, secondly, how responses to knife crime might be implemented.

Consider domestic homicides which often occur in the home and involve the use of a kitchen knife. Are kitchen knives (used in every household) to be considered bladed articles? Do kitchens in domestic households qualify as premises in which such relevant articles would be found? Would reasonable grounds for suspicion to enter such premises be the report by a neighbour of the people next door speaking with raised voices?

3. The Evidence.

Despite much media attention being focused upon weapon use and carrying in *public*, evidence consistently shows that when women are killed, they are:

- i) most likely to be killed by an intimate partner (60 out of 198 female victims (ONS, 2023), and with a knife (64 out of 198 female victims (ONS, 2023).
- ii) ONS Homicide Index data shows that an average of 1 in 4 victims of homicide using a sharp instrument in the past ten decade were female (ONS, 2024).
- iii) VKPP data shows that the most common method of killing in domestic homicides is a sharp instrument (45%) (52% for adult family homicides; 41% for intimate partner homicides) (Hoeger et al., 2025: p20).
- iv) Femicide Census data shows that 52% of women killed by men in 2021 were killed using a sharp instrument (Allen et al., 2021: p14).
- v) The most recent release of ONS Homicide Index data shows that the “most commonly used sharp instrument was a kitchen knife” (ONS, 2025: p14)

The impact of any interventions or changes in legislation must therefore reflect differences in the gendered dynamics and motivations of violence.

When seeking to tackle knife crime, and/or any criminal act involving a bladed instrument (razor blade, Stanley knife, sharpened nail file/screwdriver etc) consideration must be given to the interconnections between the implement used for killing, the place in which the killing took place, alongside the gender of the perpetrator and the victim.

Our analysis of ‘knife crime’ through a gendered lens (Cook and Walklate, 2022) argued that much media and political discourse has focused on ‘knife crime’ as confined to particular communities (i.e., racialised as a problem between young Black men in urban environments) resulting in policy solutions which are ineffective. Knives as a method of killing of women has been neglected in these debates, resulting in gaps in legislative and policy responses.

4. Recommendation.

It is unlikely that any legislative changes like the one proposed in Section 12 of the Crime and Policing Bill will achieve any change in the use and deployment of bladed instruments in committing crime if such legislative continues to proceed contrary to the evidence presented above.

In the absence of due consideration of the gendered dynamics of knife crime as outlined above we recommend that Section 12 is deleted.

5. References

Cook, E. and Walklate, S. (2022) 'Gendered Objects and Gendered Spaces: The Invisibilities of 'Knife' Crime', *Current Sociology*, 70(1): 61-76. doi:[10.1177/0011392120932972](https://doi.org/10.1177/0011392120932972)

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