

# The Case for Banning Pointed Knives

Presentation for Youth Endowment Fund

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# Impact of Pointed Knife Ban

- 1 Halved homicide rates**
- 2 Reduced knife crime**
- 3 Less knife carrying**
- 4 Prevention of thousands of injuries**



# Presentation Overview



# The Knife Crime Problem

## 85% increase

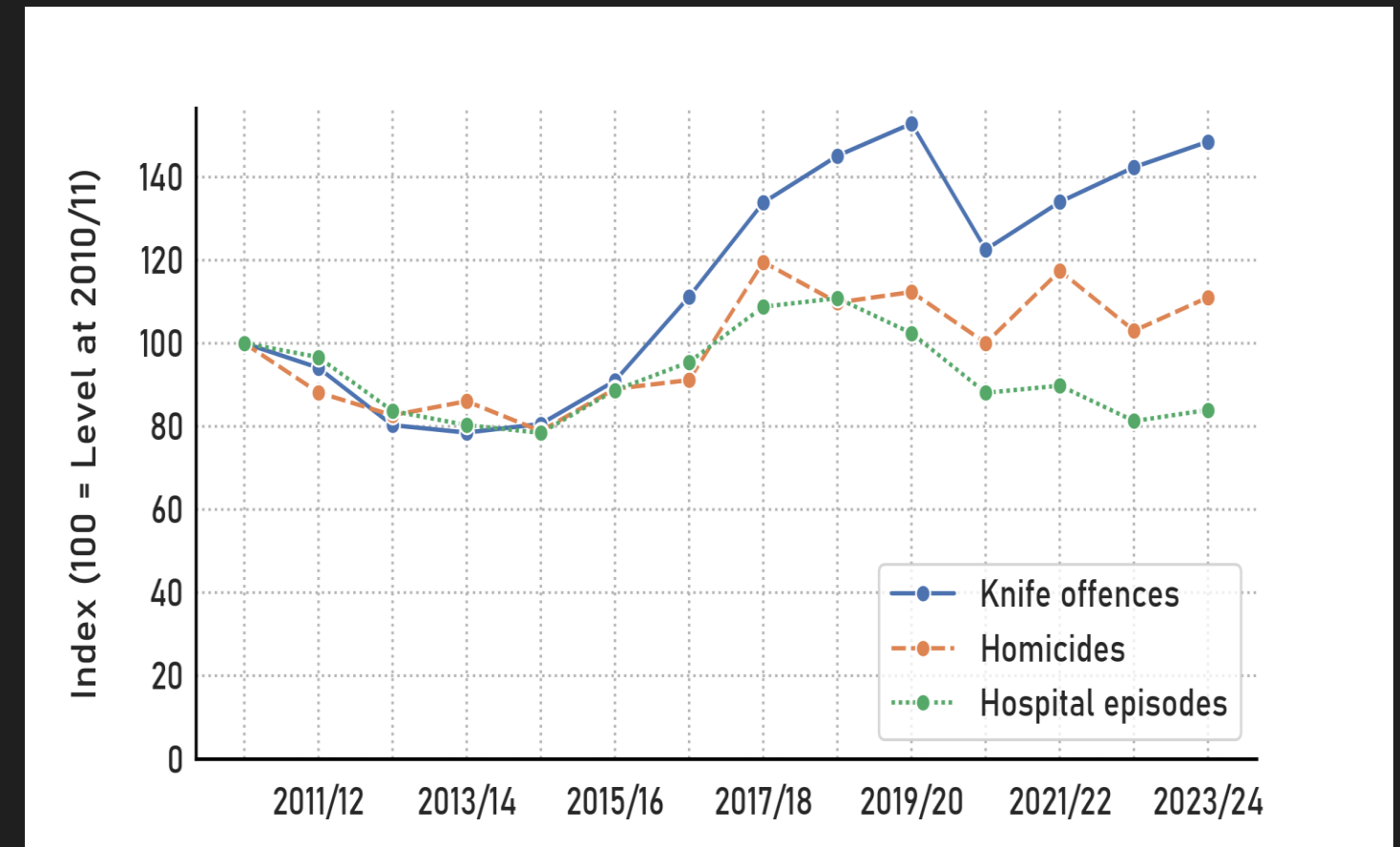
The 2010s saw a sharp and concerning rise in knife crime, marking an 85% increase.

## An exception

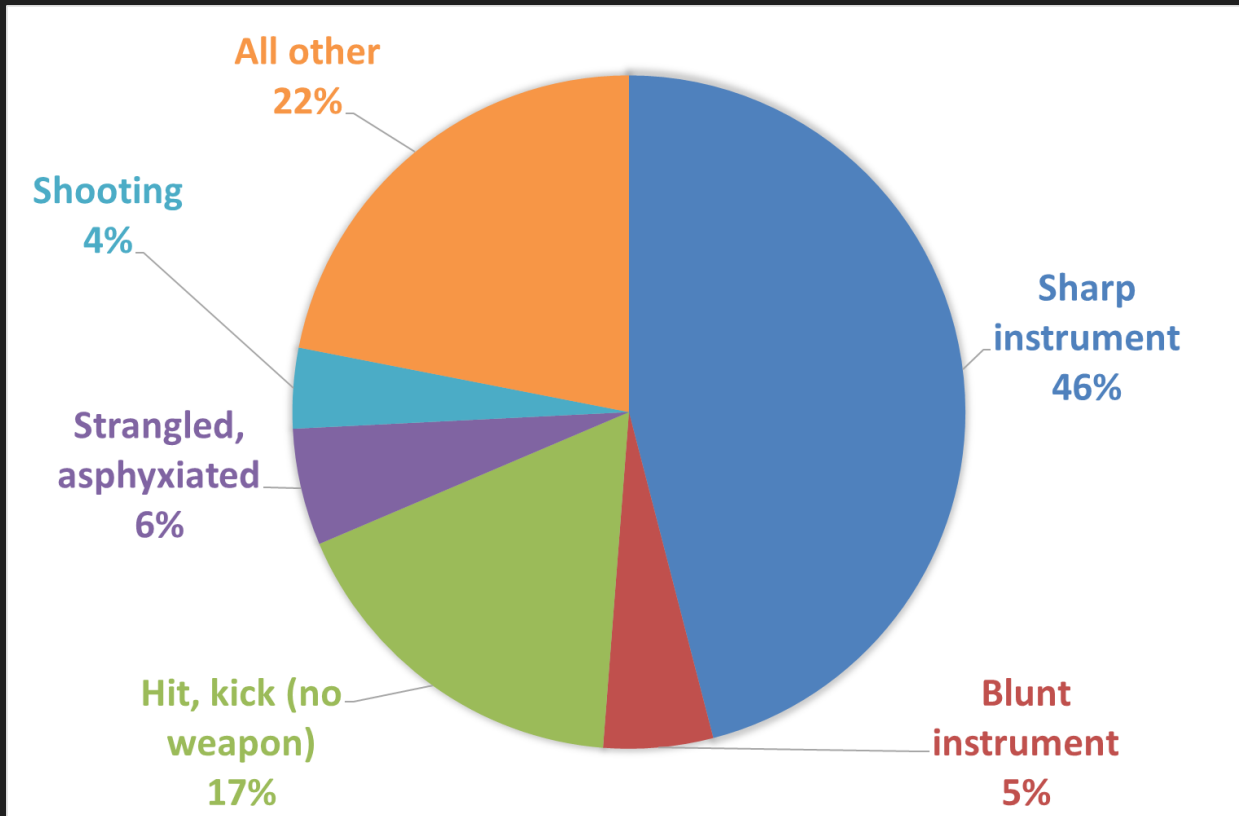
Knife crime increased when others crime types declined

## Knife crime carries severe social and economic costs

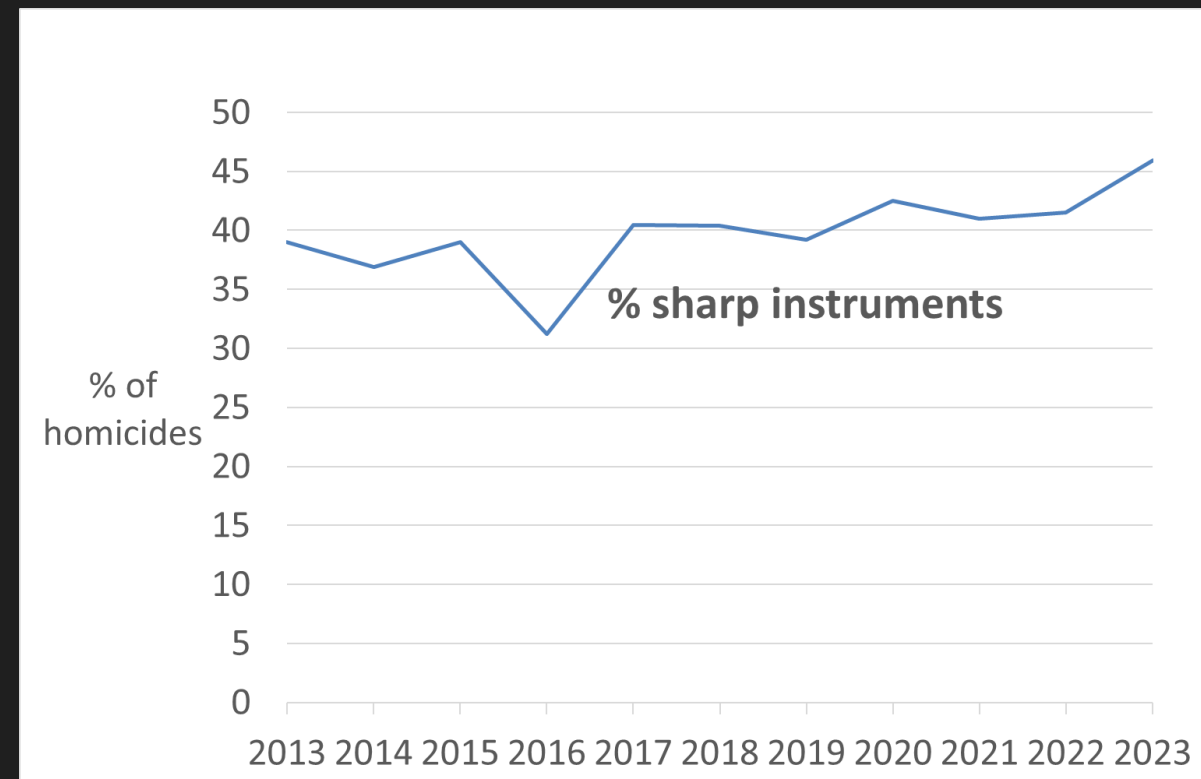
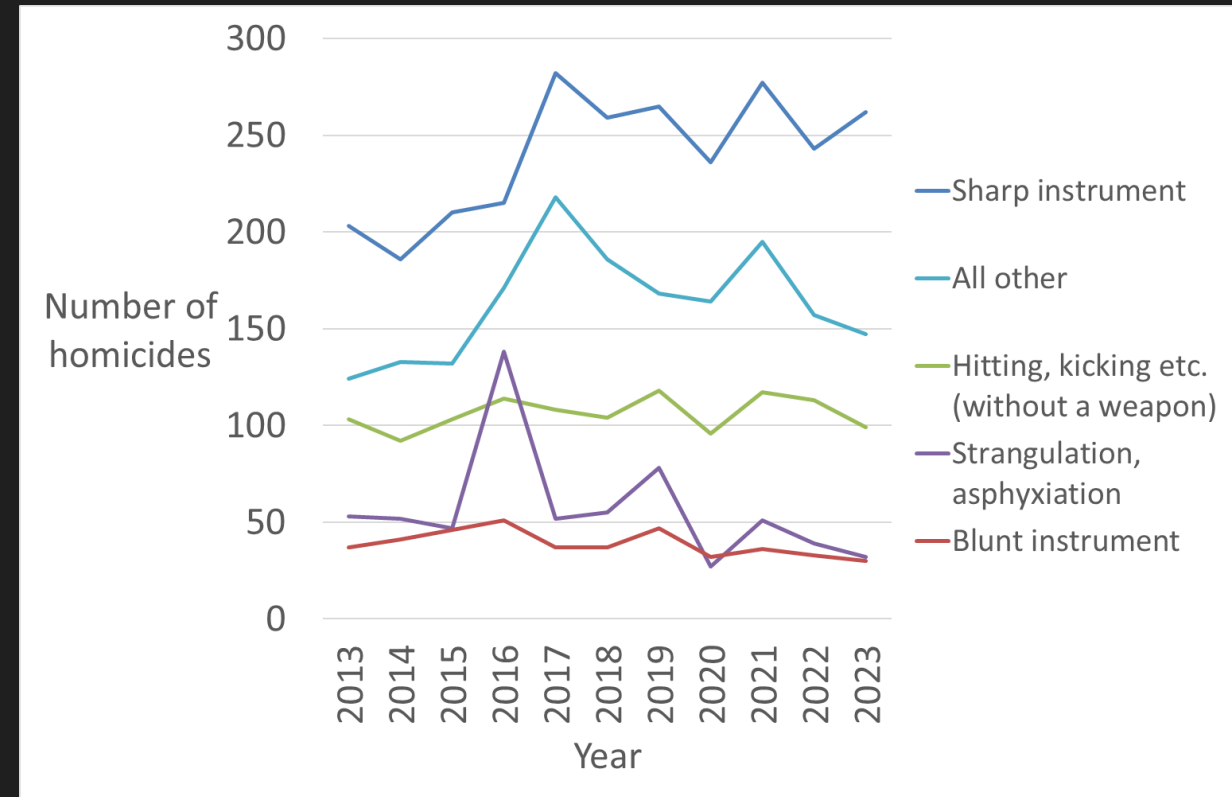
Homicide representing the most devastating consequence.



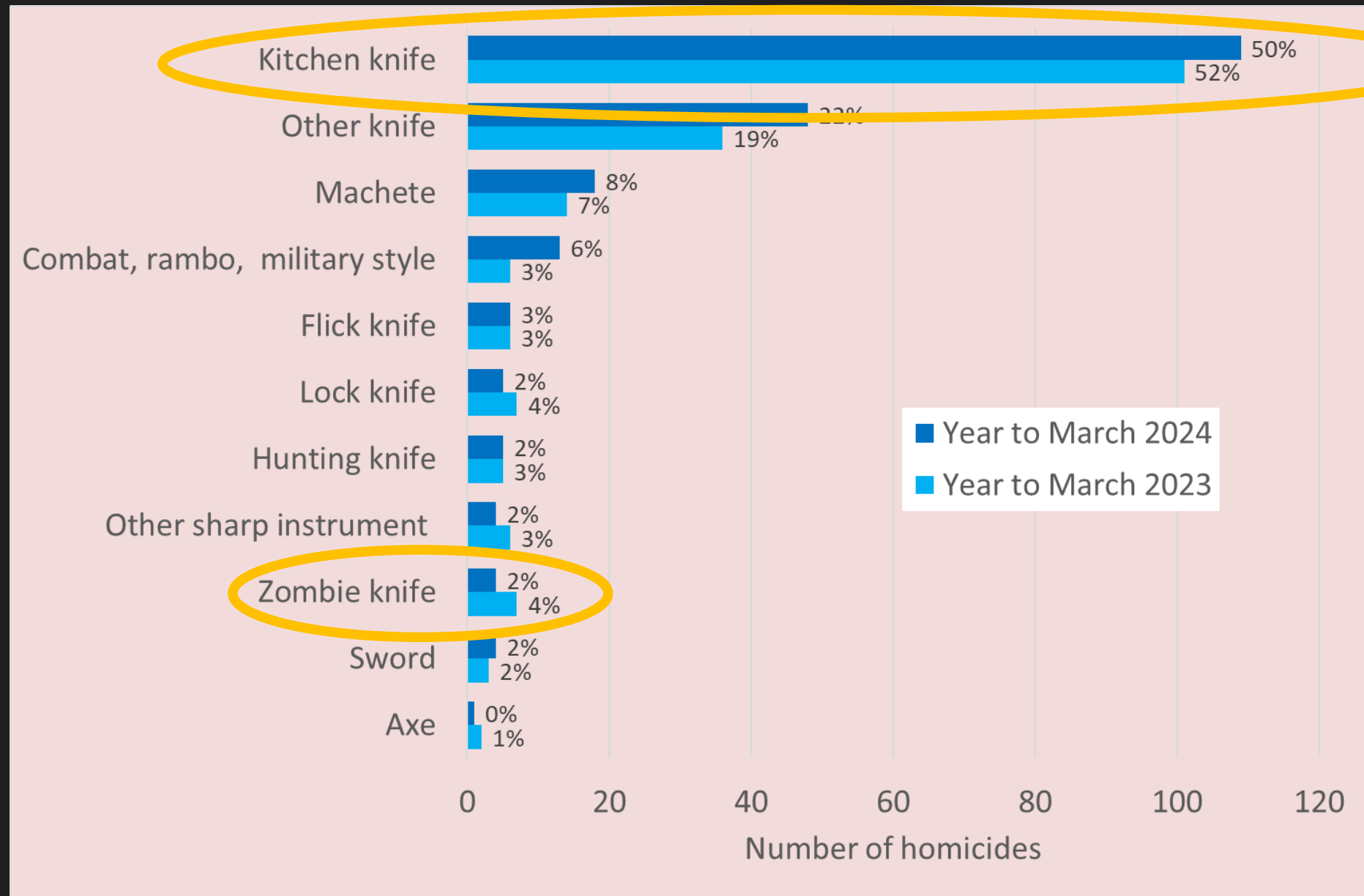
# Homicide Weapon Analysis (ONS 2025)



N = 570 homicides in 2023-4



# Type of knife (ONS 2025)



# Theoretical Context

## Opportunity reduction works

Fewer crime opportunities means less crime

## Weapon control is effective

Restricting access reduces related violence

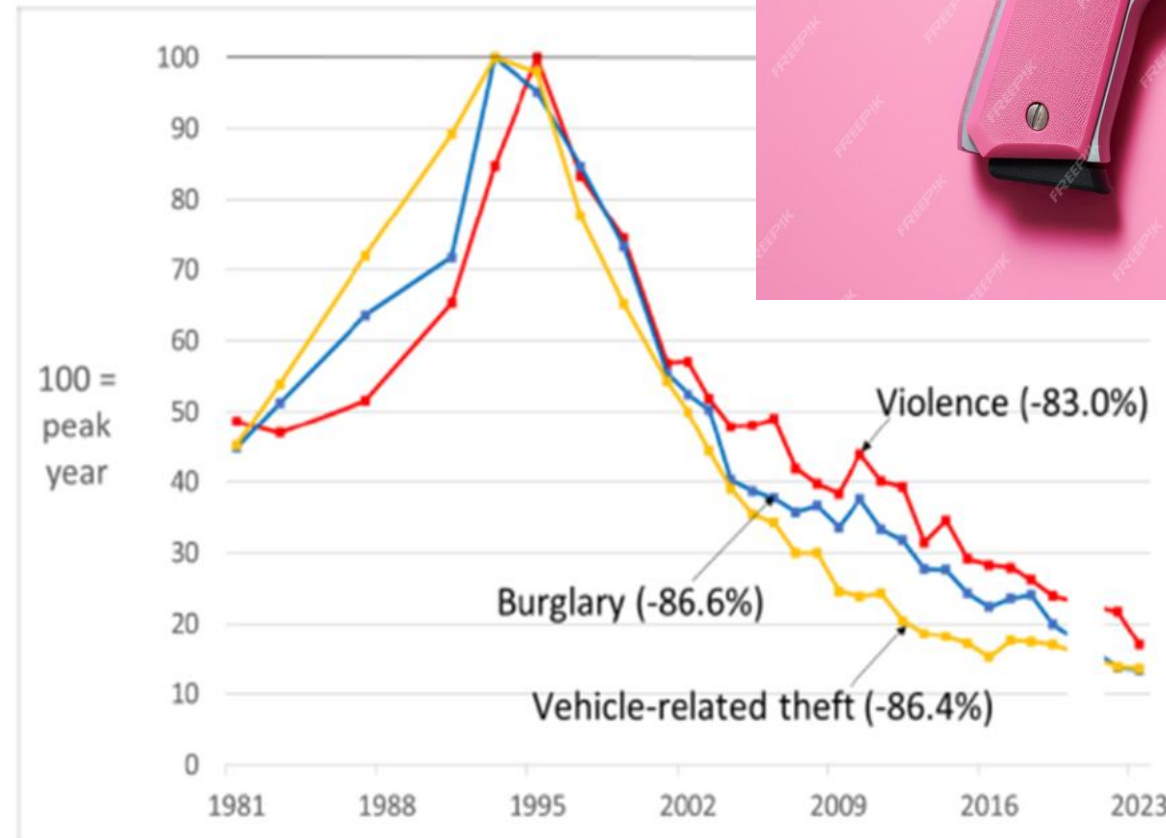


Figure 1: Crime drop in England and Wales by 2023.

(Source: CSEW; ONS (2024). Violence, domestic burglary and vehicle-related theft incidence rates each indexed to its peak year)



# Historical Precedent: Louis XIV's 1669 Ban



First pointed knife ban 1669



# Round-tip table knives normalised in Society



So common we barely recognise the crime prevention role

# Safer knives



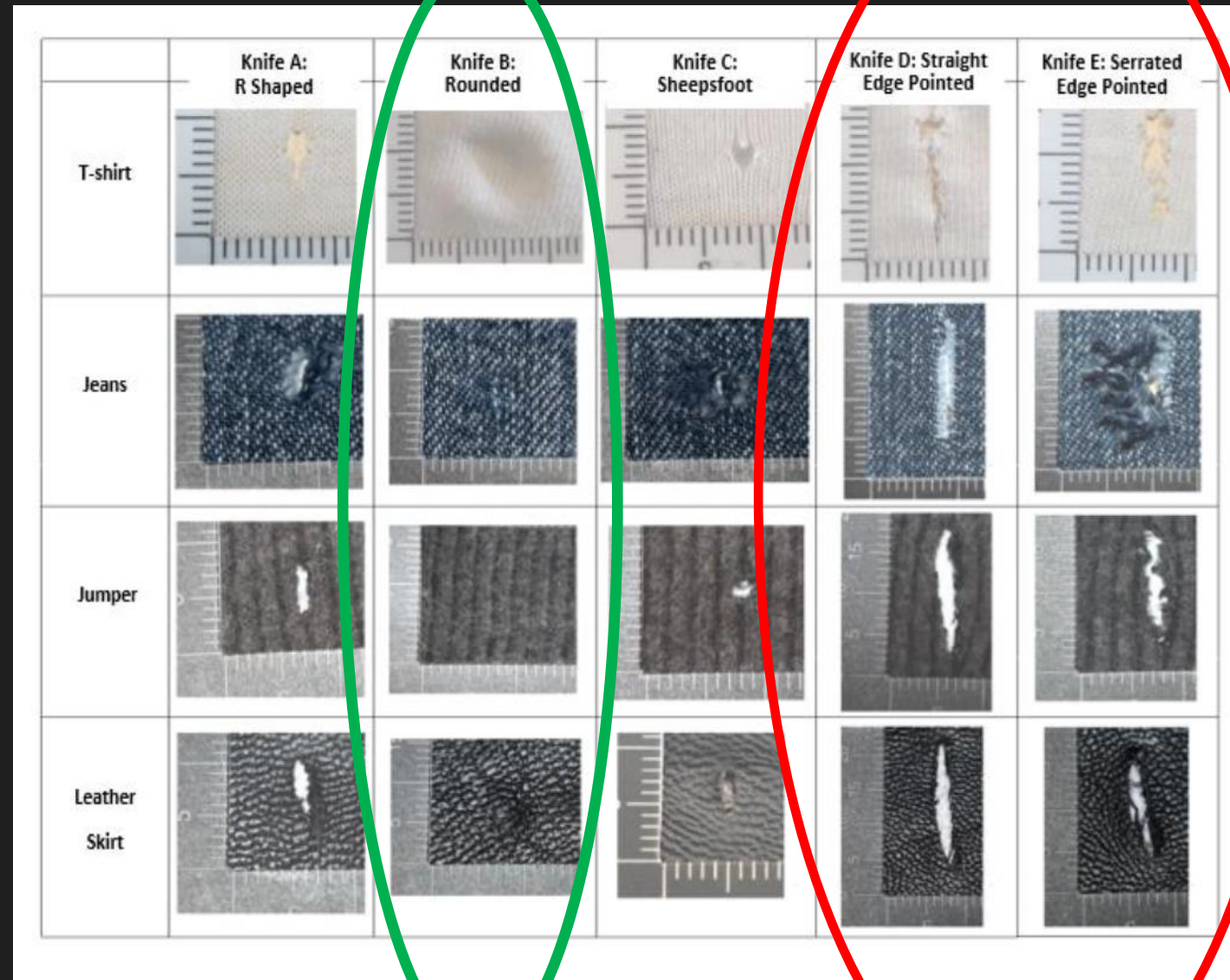
The manufacturer Viners has created a line of round-tip knives. Viners, CC BY



# Comparative Damage Assessment

Nichols-Drew et al. (2020):

Damage from pointed-tip & rounded knives





# UK Knife Crime Prevention Strategy

## **Policing strategies (College of Policing 2021)**

Limited success with current approaches

## **Violence Reduction Units (Home Office 2023)**

Making progress but challenges remain

## **Offensive Weapons Act 2019**

Legislative foundation for restrictions

## **2025 online sales restrictions**

Further tightening of regulations





# No Culinary Compromise: The Case for Round-Tip Knives

## Chef Interviews

Hern et al. (2005) conducted comprehensive interviews with professional chefs, finding that 5cm pointed knives provide no significant culinary advantage over rounded alternatives in most cooking applications.

## Consumer Testing

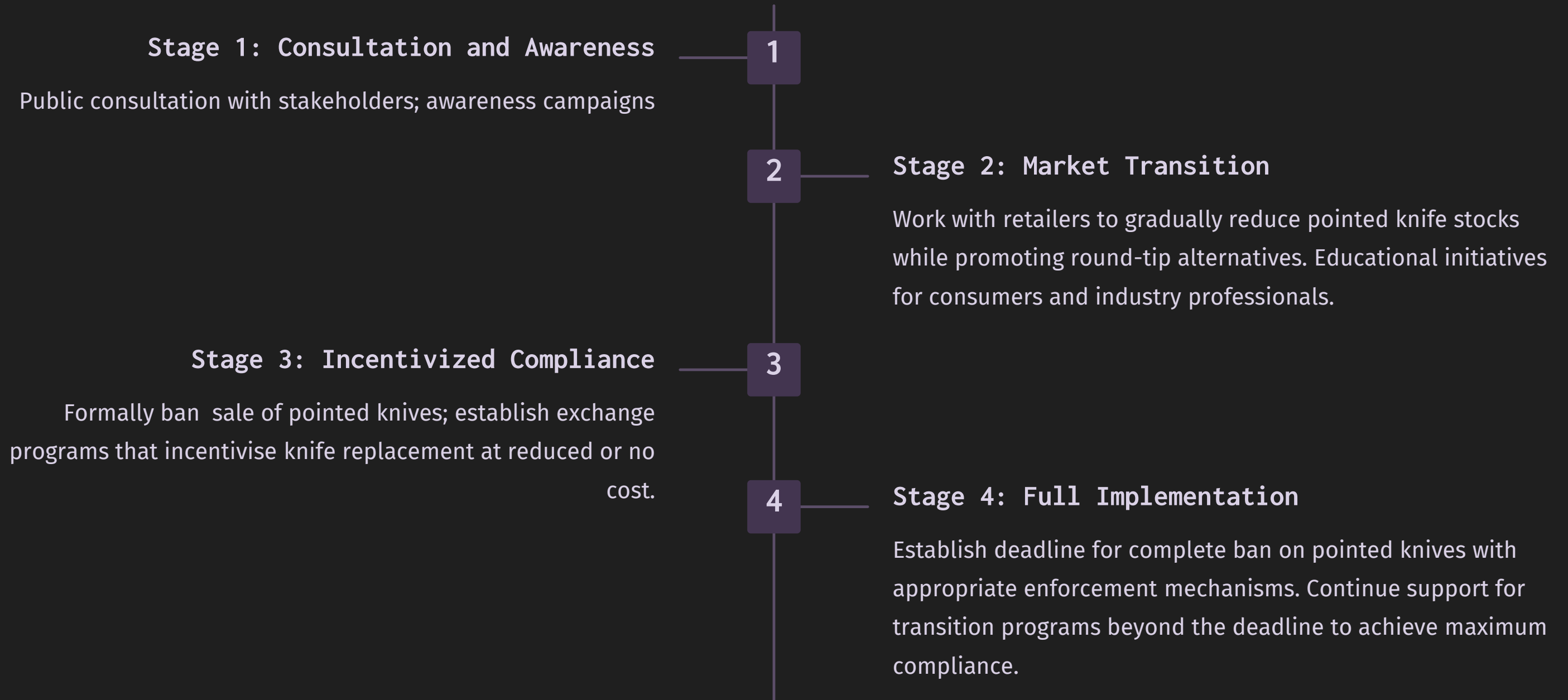
A large-scale Viners survey (n=1,700) confirmed that home cooks experienced no meaningful culinary drawbacks when using appropriately designed round-tip knives for typical kitchen tasks.

## Versatility

Modern round-tip knife designs maintain the cutting efficiency and versatility of traditional pointed knives while eliminating the lethal stabbing capability that makes them dangerous weapons.



# Strategic Implementation: A Four-Stage Approach



# Addressing Crime Displacement Concerns

1

## Common Misconception

The belief that offenders will simply switch to alternative weapons is a common but largely unfounded concern that often impedes preventive measures.

2

## Evidence-Based Reality

Systematic review by Guerette & Bowers (2009) found tactical displacement occurs in only 1 in 5 crime prevention evaluations, with most interventions resulting in little to no displacement.

3

## Net Benefit

Even when partial displacement occurs, the net effect is still a meaningful reduction in crime, as replacement weapons or methods are typically less effective or accessible.





# Evaluating Alternative Weapons

## Scissors

Less numerous in households, often have rounded tips by design, less accessible in heat-of-moment confrontations, and carry low status among potential offenders as weapons.

## Bottles

Increasingly made of plastic or cardboard rather than glass, often unavailable if recycled, and are awkward weapons that are difficult to wield effectively in confrontations.

## Screwdrivers

Typically stored in sheds or garages making them less immediately available, carry low status for threats or carrying, and generally cause reduced damage compared to pointed knives.

## Improvised Weapons

Creating effective improvised weapons like "shivs" requires premeditation, time, effort, and often specialized tools that most potential offenders don't possess, significantly raising the barrier to spontaneous violence.



# Barriers to Weapon Improvisation



## Tool Requirements

Modifying items into effective weapons typically requires specialized tools like angle grinders, which many potential offenders do not own or have immediate access to in moments of conflict or impulse.



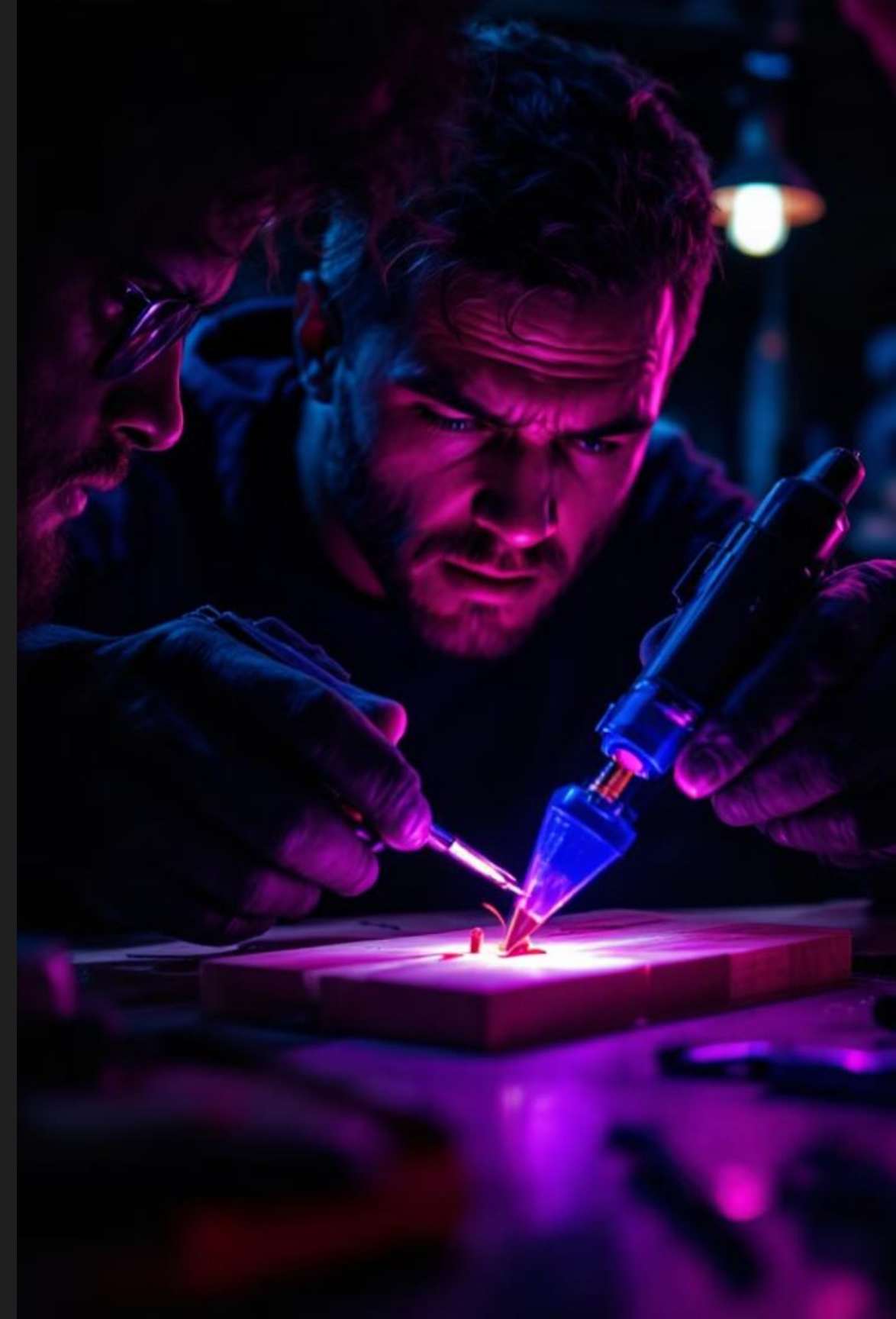
## Time & Effort

Creating improvised weapons requires significant time and effort, introducing a cooling-off period that can prevent impulsive violence. The deliberate nature of weapon creation also increases potential criminal liability.



## Skill & Knowledge

Effective weapon improvisation demands technical skills and knowledge that most individuals lack. Improvised weapons are typically lower quality, less effective, and more dangerous to the user than manufactured alternatives.



# Broader Benefits: Beyond Direct Prevention

## Reduction in Knife Crime

Beyond targeted homicide reduction, we anticipate significant decreases in non-fatal stabbings, threats, and knife carrying behavior.

## Cultural Shift

Long-term implementation may contribute to broader cultural change regarding weapon carrying and violent conflict resolution strategies.



## Diffusion of Benefits

Crime prevention interventions often produce positive spillover effects, potentially reducing related violent crimes even beyond knife incidents.

## Injury Prevention

Thousands of accidental knife injuries could be prevented annually, reducing emergency department visits and associated healthcare costs.



# Research Agenda: Building the Evidence Base

