Direct Line Home Insurance Reveals Over A Fifth Of Brits Are Concerned About Weapon Possession In Their Local Area

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Merseyside is the weapon possession hotspot

- One in six Britons have been threatened or injured by someone with a weapon or dangerous object

- One in four admit they would actively attack an intruder in their home with a weapon or household object

Merseyside has the highest incidence of weapon possession offences in England and Wales, according to new analysis1 from Direct Line home insurance. These offences relate to licensing and ownership of weapons, with London, Essex and Cleveland reporting the next highest incidence of this type of crime.

Thankfully the incidence of weapon possession crime remains relatively small, at 49 offences per 100,000 of the population in Merseyside, equal to 663 incidents in a year. In London, total incidents were 3,773 – equal to 48 incidents per 100,000 of the population.

In addition, further research2 from Direct Line Home Insurance reveals that 8.5 million Britons3 (17 per cent) have claimed to be threatened or injured by another person with an offensive weapon or dangerous object. More Brits (72 per cent) have been threatened or injured by another person whilst out in public, while 43 per cent claim to have been threatened or injured on their own property.

According to the survey, almost a quarter (22 per cent) of people say they are concerned about weapon possession in their local area. While half of respondents (50 per cent) say their level of concern over this issue has remained static in recent years, 22 per cent say they are more concerned now than they were five years ago.

Roughly 12 months after changes in the law have allowed homeowners to use greater force against burglars, Direct Line's research highlights the willingness of Britons to exercise such force. When questioned, more than a quarter (26 per cent) said they would actively attack an intruder in their home with a weapon or household object, while only 18 per cent would do so if they were unarmed. Over half (52 per cent) would use a weapon or household object to defend themselves against an intruder.

Sports equipment such as a golf club or cricket bat was most commonly cited as the weapon of choice by respondents for defending themselves, with 38 per cent selecting this.

Katie Lomas, head of Direct Line home insurance, commented: “The prospect of being threatened with a weapon is extremely frightening, so whilst weapon possession crime rates are relatively low, the public is still understandably very concerned about it.

“If you suspect there is an intruder in your home, the natural reaction might be to confront them, but we would always recommend against resorting to violence, as you're putting your personal safety at even greater risk.

“Prevention is always better than cure however, so carrying out simple security measures such as keeping doors and windows locked and fitting a good alarm system, can really help ensure householders and their possessions remain safe.”

Direct Line's study revealed that a much higher proportion of males than females have been threatened or injured by an attacker with a weapon or dangerous object, at 22 per cent and 12 per cent respectively. The same was also true of those who live alone, with 25 per cent having experienced such an attack whilst on their own property, compared to 15 per cent of those who live with other people.

Almost a fifth (19 per cent) of violent incidents in England and Wales involve the use of a weapon, with a knife being the most commonly used weapon, (in seven per cent of violent incidents).4

- Ends -

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Notes to editors:

[1]. Analysis of ONS statistics (Crime in England & Wales, year ending June 2013). Results relate to England and Wales June 2012 to June 2013.
http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/crime-stats/crime-statistics/period-ending-june-2013/rft-table-4.xls

Weapon possession offences relate to licensing and ownership of weapons, i.e. where there was no violence involved at the time of the offence.

A 'weapon' constitutes any item that was considered to be a weapon by the victim; this includes knives, sticks, stones, bottles, etc.

Trends in such offences can reflect changes in police activity as well as actual crime rates.

2. Research conducted by Opinium research, 11th – 12th March 2014 amongst a UK nationally representative sample of 2001 people. Results have been extrapolated based on a national population size of 50,371,000 (ONS).

3. 16.84 per cent of respondents surveyed indicated they have been threatened or injured by someone with an offensive weapon or with a potentially dangerous object (e.g. glass bottle, baseball bat, firework, hammer, brick or any other object that could inflict serious injury or harm). 16.84 per cent % x 50,371,00 (2013 UK adult population according to ONS, 2010) = 8,483,271 Britons

4. According to the Crime Survey for England and Wales 2012/2013 http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/crime-

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