



Home Office

Prohibiting Ninja Swords – Legal Description and Defences

Government Response

27 March 2025

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1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. The Government is committed to halving knife crime in a decade** and is pursuing a range of measures to achieve this goal. We have already banned zombie-style knives and machetes, are planning to introduce personal liabilities measures against senior executives of technology companies who flout the rules around knives in the upcoming Crime and Policing Bill and have commissioned an end-to-end review of online knife sales to ensure that dangerous blades do not end up in the wrong hands. A Coalition to Tackle Knife Crime has been established to save lives and make Britain a safer place for the next generation and the Government has established the Young Futures Programme, which aims to intervene earlier to stop young people being drawn into crime.
- 1.2. Part of the Government's manifesto commitment was to ban Ninja swords.** Whilst we recognise that Ninja swords are sometimes owned and used legitimately and responsibly, the Government is exerting efforts in restricting access and limiting circulation of Ninja swords to prevent them being used as weapons in crime.
- 1.3. We will add Ninja swords to the list of prohibited offensive weapons** set out in the Criminal Justice Act 1988 (Offensive Weapons Order) 1988. This will mean that it will become an offence to manufacture, import, sell and generally supply or possess a Ninja sword, unless a defence applies.
- 1.4. As part of this work, we have developed proposals on the legal definition of the Ninja sword and the defences that should apply.** We have tested the proposals as part of a four-week consultation, seeking views from the public, interested groups and other relevant stakeholders.
- 1.5. To capture the intended types of swords, and to limit capturing knives and swords that are typically uses for legitimate purposes, our working description is premised around the standard description of a Ninja sword.** We have included what is known as a 'Reverse Tanto'-style point to future-proof the legislation. We have provided further definitions around the cutting edges, making it clearer which element of the sword that we are referring to. We are also proposing that most of the defences available for zombie-style knives and curved swords are extended to be made available to Ninja swords as well.
- 1.6. The consultation ran from Wednesday 13 November to Wednesday 11 December 2024.** The consultation was open to all members of the public. This report summarises the respondents' views on the consultation proposals, the Government's response and the next steps.
- 1.7. In total, we received 312 responses.** This included responses from the SmartSurvey link and via emails to the dedicated mailbox (ninja-swords-consultation@homeoffice.gov.uk).

- 1.8. The majority of respondents agreed with the Government's proposals.** 64% of respondents were supportive, with 33% not being supportive and 3% not providing a view.
- 1.9. Whilst some respondents feared a ban would inadvertently punish those who own ninja swords for legitimate purposes, others wanted the Government to go further.** Others said that they did not think that banning Ninja swords would contribute towards a reduction in knife-enabled criminality. Some people called for continued protection from defences.
- 1.10. We want to thank everyone who participated for providing views.** Responses have been considered as part of the next step in banning Ninja swords.

2. Introduction

- 2.1. **As part of the Government's commitment to banning Ninja swords**, we have developed a working legal description of Ninja swords that should fall within the scope of the ban.
- 2.2. **Working with the police and various interested stakeholder groups**, we developed a legal definition around the standard features of a typical Ninja swords. We believe that the legal definition will capture Ninja swords accurately without banning other items as an unintended consequence.
- 2.3. **We are proposing that most of the existing defences for some other bladed articles are extended to Ninja swords.** This will protect the legitimate uses that include but are not limited to, historical importance and permitted activities.

Legal Definition

- 2.4. **The legal definition that we tested as part of this consultation was as follows:**

A fixed bladed article with a blade between 14-24 inches (the length of the blade being the straight-line distance from the top of the handle to the tip of the blade) with:

- (i) A single straight cutting edge; and;*
- (ii) A tanto style point - by tanto style point, we mean a point which is created by the cutting-edge changing direction in a short (relative to the overall length of the blade) straight line, with an angle (between the primary long cutting edge and secondary short cutting edge at the tip) greater than 90 degrees and continuing up to form a point of less than 90 degree, where the secondary short cutting edge meets the spine. The secondary short cutting edge should not deviate in length more than 5% more or less than the width of the blade immediately after the hilt; or*
- (iii) A reversed tanto style point – by reverse tanto style point, we mean a point which is created by the cutting-edge changing direction in a short (relative to the overall length of the blade) straight line, with an angle (between the primary long cutting edge and secondary short cutting edge at the tip) less than 90 degrees and continuing up to form a point of greater than 90 degree, where the secondary short cutting edge meets the spine. The secondary short cutting edge should not deviate in length more than 5% more or less than the width of the blade immediately after the hilt.*

Defences

2.5. Existing defences available to other offensive weapons, that we consulted where they needed to be extended to Ninja swords, were as follows:

- *The weapon is antique (over 100 years old).*
- *Functions carried out on behalf of the Crown or of a visiting force.*
- *The item being of historical importance.*
- *Making the weapons available to a museum or gallery in certain circumstances.*
- *Educational purposes.*
- *Production of certain films or certain television programmes.*
- *Theatrical performances and rehearsals of such performances.*
- *Made before 1954.*
- *Made at any other time according to the traditional methods of sword making by hand.*
- *Religious reasons.*
- *Religious ceremonies.*
- *Use in permitted activities (for example a historical re-enactment or sporting activity).*
- *Blunt.*

3. Summary of Responses

Respondents

- 3.1. At the close of the consultation, we received a total of 312 responses: 301 responses via SmartSurvey and 11 email responses.** We had 141 partial responses, which were not considered as part of the analysis. A partial response was considered to lack consent to include views into our analysis.
- 3.2. To encourage as much engagement from all members of the public as possible, we did not mandate geographical location to be disclosed when completing responses.** This means that we are not able to determine locations which have expressed high or low interest and the varying impact of these proposals.
- 3.3. Equally, we did not mandate disclosure of professional roles of respondents.** This was to ensure that equal weight was placed on each of the responses, during analysis.
- 3.4. Of those who chose to disclose this information, we had a total of 18 self-reporting as either an owner or seller.** Breaking this down further, 15 were owners and three were sellers.

Responses

- 3.5. On our proposals about the legal definition (as set out in paragraph 2.4), we had an overall support of 64%. 33% disagreed with our proposals and 3% did not provide a view.**
- 3.6. On our proposals about the defences (as set out in paragraph 2.5), we had an overall support of 58%. 39% disagreed with our proposals and 3% did not provide a view.**
- 3.7. A number of respondents said that they did not think the Government was going far enough with the proposals. 15% of respondents called for a blanket ban on all bladed articles.**
- 3.8. There was also some concern that the proposals are unlikely to contribute towards reducing knife-crime. 10% of respondents said that they don't think that these measures will contribute towards the Government's objectives in halving knife crime in a decade. Ninja swords are rarely used in violent incidents therefore a ban is unlikely to have significant impact. Further, respondents have suggested that criminals will find other means to commit knife-enabled crimes and violence in the absence of Ninja swords. Some said that in this context, these measures will inadvertently punish those who own and use Ninja swords for legitimate reasons such as martial arts practitioners or collectors.**
- 3.9. There were also comments about the need to provide defences. 6% have asked that defences are made available for owning, selling and manufacturing Ninja swords.**

4. Government Response – Summary

- 4.1. Taking into consideration the responses received from this consultation, the Government intends to progress with the proposals.** As outlined in paragraphs 3.5 and 3.6, there is broad support on both the proposals for the legal definition and the defences. Section 5 will provide closer analysis of the Government response.
- 4.2. Whilst we agree that Ninja swords only contribute towards a small number of violent incidents,** taking pre-emptive action in banning these dangerous weapons will result in less Ninja swords in circulation and reduce the risk of such swords being used to murder or inflict serious injuries or to threaten someone. Removing such threatening weapons from circulation will help with restoring public confidence and help policing take effective action against anyone still holding such a sword.

Legal Definition

- 4.3. On the legal definition, the Government has noted the responses and will make some amendments to make the description clearer and more accurate as set out below.**

The weapon sometimes known as a “ninja sword”, being a sword with—

- i) a blade whose length is at least 14 inches, but no more than 24 inches (the length of the blade being the straight-line distance from the top of the handle to the tip of the blade),*
 - ii) a primary straight cutting edge,*
 - iii) a secondary straight cutting edge,*
 - iv) a blunt spine, and*
 - v) either a tanto style point or a reversed tanto style point.*
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- a) a sword has a tanto style point if—
the angle between its primary straight cutting edge and its secondary straight cutting edge is an angle of greater than 90 degrees, and the angle between its secondary straight cutting edge and its spine is an angle of less than 90 degrees.*
 - b) a sword has a reversed tanto style point if—
the angle between its primary straight cutting edge and its secondary straight cutting edge is an angle of less than 90 degrees, and the angle between its secondary straight cutting edge and its spine is an angle of greater than 90 degrees.*
 - c) a primary straight cutting edge is the longest cutting edge of a sword which immediately connects to the handle;*
 - d) a secondary straight cutting edge is a cutting edge—
which forms an angle with the primary straight cutting edge and the spine, and is no more than 5% longer or shorter in length than the width of the blade immediately after the handle.*

Defences

- 4.4. On defences, the Government intends to apply most of the existing defences (including those that apply to curved swords) to Ninja swords, under the legal definition.**
- 4.5. The Government has carefully considered the comments about defences put forward by the respondents.** Our intention is to provide defences for Ninja swords that are made by hand, are antiques, are of historical importance, are to be used in permitted activities and re-enactment, or where the blade is blunt.

5. Question-by-Question Analysis

- 5.1. This section provides a question-by-question analysis** to the responses that we have received across the course of the consultation period.

Question 1: Do you agree with the Government's legal description of Ninja swords?

- 5.2.** Of the 301 responses, 194 (64%) responded “Yes” to the question. 98 (33%) responded “No”. The remaining did not provide a view.
- 5.3.** Of those responding “Yes”, 91 respondents (47%) chose not to disclose their role, 44 (23%) self-reported to be members of the public, 44 (23%) self-reported to be from various professions, 11 (6%) self-reported to be collectors or members of interested groups and 3 (2%) self-reported to be from third-sector organisations. The remaining provided information did not fit into any of the categories or did not respond to the question accordingly.
- 5.4.** Of those responding “No”, 39 (40%) respondents chose not to disclose their role, 25 (26%) self-reported to be members of the public, 19 (19%) self-reported to be from various professionals, 9 (9%) self-reported to be collectors or members of interested groups and 1 (1%) self-reported to be from a third-sector organisation. The remaining provided information that did not fit into any of these categories or did not respond to the question accordingly.

Government Response:

- 5.5.** The Government will proceed under the legal definition with some amendments. This includes making clearer the elements of the swords that we are referring to when we stipulate lengths (such as defining what we mean by primary and secondary cutting edges). Taking into consideration many respondents’ concerns around levels of understanding of the terminologies ‘Ninja sword’ and ‘tanto’ – we have elaborated on what we mean by a tanto-style point.

Question 2: Are there any further features that we should consider to be included?

- 5.6.** Of the 301 responses, 118 (39%) responded “Yes” to the question. 161 (53%) responded “No”. The remaining did not provide a view. From this, we have analysed 63% in being supportive of proposals, 33% not being supportive and 1% suggesting an amendment to the proposed legal definition.
- 5.7.** Many people used this section to call for an outright ban to all bladed articles. Others have pointed out that banning Ninja swords will result in criminals using other bladed articles to commit violence. Some people have asked that further regulatory measures are put in place to inhibit ownership and circulation of knives. These include licensing schemes, more robust ID checks, increasing the age limit of knife purchasing and sanctions on companies who flout the rules. Many people have asked that the defences are provided for Ninja swords – for uses including (but not limited) to gardening, sporting, and for antique items. A few respondents have

asked that tougher legal consequences should be provided as a deterrent, including longer prison sentences. Some respondents asked that the Government consider future proofing the legislation to avoid manufacturers working around the legal definition to produce Ninja swords. A few responses have suggested that the use of the word ‘tanto’ to describe the tip of a ninja sword could be confusing, as a tanto is also a type of knife.

Government Response:

- 5.8.** The legal definition was developed to preclude knives and swords that are not Ninja swords and which we do not currently intend to ban. We intend to limit and restrict access to Ninja swords, which will result in a reduced number of Ninja swords in circulation. This will mean that Ninja swords are used less for violent crime. We are seeking to future-proof the legislation by including the “reverse tanto-point” into the legal definition. This will ensure that manufacturers do not seek to work around the legal definition to produce Ninja swords with a reversed tanto point.
- 5.9.** We have also tried to future-proof the legislation by including blades with lengths from 14 to 24 inches. It is not common to find Ninja swords as short as 14 inches, but we want to avoid shorter swords becoming available. The Government will amend the wording in the legal definition to clarify that by ‘tanto’ we refer to a type of point usually associated with modern Ninja swords and not to a traditional Japanese knife.

Question 3: Do you own a Ninja sword?

- 5.10.** Of the 301 responses, 15 (5%) responded “Yes” to the question. 282 (94%) responded “No”. The remaining did not provide a view.
- 5.11.** Most people purchased their Ninja swords online, with a few having purchased it in-store. Respondents claimed to have paid between £101 to £500 for their swords, with the most common prices paid being between £150 and £200.

Government Response:

- 5.12.** The information on the amount paid for Ninja swords will help in the planning for the Ninja Sword Surrender Scheme, which the Government is legally required to provide in these circumstances.

Question 4: Do you manufacture Ninja swords in England and Wales?

- 5.13.** Of the 301 responses, 0 (0%) responded “Yes” to the question. 296 (98%) responded “No”. The remaining respondents did not provide a view.

Government Response:

5.14. There is insufficient data received in the consultation to assess the impact of our proposals on manufacturers.

Question 5: Do you sell Ninja swords in England and Wales?

5.15. Of the 301 responses, three (1%) responded “Yes” to the question. 294 (98%) responded “No”. The remaining did not provide a view.

5.16. Of the three responses, two reported to sell less than 1,000 units per year, and one between 5,001 and 10,000 units. One reported to sell at the average retail price of under £10, one between £51 and £100 and one over £500. One reported to have less than 1,000 units left in stock, one between 10,001 and 100,000 units and one had none left in stock. All three sellers employed less than 10 people.

Government Response:

5.17. The sales per year have confirmed our assumptions that there are fewer Ninja swords on the market compared with other bladed items. Furthermore, the number of businesses selling Ninja swords is comparatively low.

Question 6: As part of this consultation, we are trying to determine the size of the market and circulation of Ninja swords. If applicable, please provide any further evidence or information on how many Ninja swords are currently in circulation or sold annually in England and Wales

5.18. Of the 301 responses, six (2%) provided a response.

5.19. All the responses said they were guesses based on personal experience. Two respondents thought that there were less than 1,000 Ninja swords in circulation or sold annually. One thought it was between 1,001 and 5,000. One thought it was between 10,001 and 100,000. Two respondents thought it was over 100,000.

Government Response:

5.20. We do not consider the information in the consultation responses to be sufficiently strong to use for our assessment of economic impact.

Question 7: Do you agree with the proposed defences and exemptions relating to Ninja swords?

- 5.21.** Of the 301 responses, 175 (58%) responded “Yes” to the question. 116 (39%) responded “No”. The remaining respondents did not provide a view.
- 5.22.** Of those responding “Yes”, 79 respondents (45%) chose not to disclose their role, 37 (21%) self-reported to be members of the public, 38 (22%) self-reported to be from various professions, 15 (9%) self-reported to be collectors or members of interested groups and two (1%) self-reported to be from third-sector organisations. The remaining provided information did not fit into any of the categories or did not respond to the question accordingly.
- 5.23.** Of those responding “No”, 52 (45%) respondents chose not to disclose their role, 29 (25%) self-reported to be members of the public, 22 (19%) self-reported to from various professionals and three (3%) self-reported to be collectors or members of interested groups. The remaining responses provided information that did not fit into any of these categories or did not respond to the question accordingly.

Government Response:

- 5.24.** The Government will be extending some of the existing defences (including that of curved swords) to Ninja swords once the ban comes into force.

Question 8: Are there any further defences that we should consider to be included?

- 5.25.** Of the 301 responses, we have analysed 168 responses (56%) in being supportive of proposals, 114 responses (38%) not being supportive and three responses (1%) suggesting an amendment to the proposed legal definition. nine responses (3%) made comments that fell into the ‘anything else’ category.
- 5.26.** Some respondents said that no defences should be made available for anyone owning, selling or manufacturing Ninja swords. Others suggested that regulatory measures should be introduced such as a national database of sword ownership. Some suggested that the Government should look at banning blade types instead of overall models as they claim cheap and mass-manufactured blades are typically used for violent intent. Respondents also asked that defences are available for antiques, blunt, made-by-hand, and sporting purposes. We have also been asked to consider extending the defences for law-enforcement agencies and for culinary purposes.

Government Response:

- 5.27.** The Government will extend most of the existing defences in legislation to Ninja swords.

Question 9: Have you got any other comments?

- 5.28.** Some respondents said that the Government should look at the root of the issue of knife-crime. Others pointed to a lack of historical provenance of Ninja swords, raising concerns that the Government is trying to ban something that does not exist. Some have also suggested the similarity between the proposed legal definition of Ninja swords and that of other types of bladed articles.

6. Next Steps

- 6.1. The Government will introduce legislation** to add Ninja swords to the list of prohibited weapons in the Criminal Justice Act 1988 (Offensive Weapons Order) 1988.
- 6.2. The Surrender Scheme for Ninja swords** will be launched ahead of a ban on Ninja swords coming into force. This will enable those in possession of Ninja swords to surrender their sword safely.
- 6.3. Accompanying guidance for the Surrender Scheme will be published** alongside the laying of the Statutory Instrument.

7. Consultation Analysis Methodology

- 7.1. The analysis of the total responses received were completed by several Home Office staff.** The quantitative data were quality assured by the Home Office Analysis and Insights team.
- 7.2. Questions enlisted under Section 5 were the questions as directly worded in the public consultation.**
- 7.3. All responses were considered equally.** We received responses via the online survey and through the dedicated mailbox.
- 7.4. The analysis was conducted against only completed responses.** Incomplete or partially completed responses were considered to lack consent to use in our analysis.
- 7.5. Quantitative data (i.e., “Yes” and “No” questions) were automatically collected and converted into metrics informing levels of support.** This data has been used throughout this document and predicated our analysis.
- 7.6. Qualitative data were gathered through analysing the free-text boxes.** This was then further categorised into the relevant category – as referred to in this document (this included “Supportive of proposals”, “Not supportive of proposals”, “Amendment to proposals”, “Unintended consequences” and “Anything else”). This was then used as a tally to gauge broader views and identify key themes.

- 7.7. Whilst there is an element of subjectivity in analysing the responses, this was mitigated by the additional layers of quality assurance that was involved.**
- 7.8. All percentages provided in this document have been provided to the nearest whole number.**
- 7.9. Respondents were not required to respond to each question to submit a response.** This meant that we received a different number of responses to each question. The analysis provided were based on the number of responses that we received for that question and not on the total number of responses.