# London struggles with rising phone thefts despite crackdown efforts, contrasting with Mumbai's open use



A London-based digital creator, having travelled across 30 capital cities worldwide, recently expressed an unexpected sense of insecurity when using his phone in London, a city often regarded as one of the most developed in the UK. On Instagram, he shared a striking video comparing his experience of phone usage in Mumbai versus London. The footage shows him casually using his phone on the bustling footpaths of Mumbai, while in London, he is forced to conceal his device under a jacket and constantly scan his surroundings for potential phone snatchers. He even reported being approached by patrolling police officers in one of London's supposedly safest areas, warning him about a spike in phone thefts in the city.

The video quickly resonated with many Internet users, prompting numerous comments recalling personal encounters with phone theft or warnings about pickpockets in London. Users shared that their encounters with pickpocketing occurred in London rather than cities like Mumbai or other countries they had lived in. Others acknowledged a pervasive culture of caution, with one describing the constant paranoia of withdrawing a phone in public to avoid attracting thieves.

This anecdotal evidence aligns with official crime data from London, where mobile phone thefts have been a persistent concern. In late 2024, police and city officials described mobile phone snatching in central London as bordering on an epidemic, with approximately 69% of thefts related to mobile phones—translating to around 185,000 stolen devices across the city. Incidents often involve thieves on electric bikes swooping in on unsuspecting pedestrians in tourist-heavy and upscale areas. The Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, publicly pledged to intensify crackdowns on this rising crime.

Law enforcement agencies have responded with a series of increasingly sophisticated initiatives. The Metropolitan Police carried out an intensive operation in early 2025, targeting hotspots such as the West End and Westminster. They succeeded in arresting 230 individuals and recovering over 1,000 stolen phones in just a week, employing plain-clothes officers and advanced tracking technologies to dismantle theft rings involved in a £50 million-a-year illicit market in stolen phones. Following this, the City of London Police launched a three-year policing plan focusing specifically on phone snatching. This strategy includes innovative deterrents such as marking theft-prone streets with visible blue paint to boost public vigilance and deploying dedicated surveillance teams.

By May 2025, these concentrated efforts showed tangible results. The City of London Police reported a nearly 30% reduction in phone snatching incidents in the first four months compared to the previous year. Enhanced police presence, Operation Swipe, and real-time monitoring of CCTV footage have all contributed to making London a less attractive environment for phone thieves.

Despite these gains, the creator’s video underscores the lingering perception and reality of phone snatching risks in London, especially compared to cities like Mumbai, where individuals may feel freer to use their phones openly without fear. This juxtaposition highlights not only the ongoing challenges facing UK capital city safety but also the complexities in addressing urban crime where high-profile policing efforts and public sentiment sometimes seem out of sync.

The viral reaction to the video and the personal stories shared online reflect a broader anxiety about personal security in London’s crowded urban spaces—one that authorities continue to tackle with a blend of traditional policing and new community-engagement measures.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://curlytales.com/india/travel/mumbai-safer-than-london-creator-highlights-phone-snatching-issue-in-uk-capital-netizens-react/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://curlytales.com/india/travel/mumbai-safer-than-london-creator-highlights-phone-snatching-issue-in-uk-capital-netizens-react/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[6]](https://www.thenationalnews.com/news/uk/2024/12/27/phone-theft-hotspots-in-london-revealed-as-crime-reaches-epidemic-level/), [[1]](https://curlytales.com/india/travel/mumbai-safer-than-london-creator-highlights-phone-snatching-issue-in-uk-capital-netizens-react/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[4]](https://www.thenationalnews.com/news/uk/2025/02/06/police-seize-1000-stolen-phones-in-london-crackdown-on-tourist-hotspot-crime/), [[5]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c4g39ldprr3o)
* Paragraph 5 – [[3]](https://www.cityoflondon.police.uk/news/city-of-london/news/2025/april/city-of-london-police-launch-new-initiatives-to-tackle-phone-snatching-as-new-three-year-policing-plan-published/), [[2]](https://www.cityoflondon.police.uk/news/city-of-london/news/2025/may/city-of-london-police-tactics-preventing-phone-theft/)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://curlytales.com/india/travel/mumbai-safer-than-london-creator-highlights-phone-snatching-issue-in-uk-capital-netizens-react/), [[6]](https://www.thenationalnews.com/news/uk/2024/12/27/phone-theft-hotspots-in-london-revealed-as-crime-reaches-epidemic-level/), [[7]](https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/snatch-theft-london-police-taking-measures-to-curb-phone-stealing/3397957)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://curlytales.com/india/travel/mumbai-safer-than-london-creator-highlights-phone-snatching-issue-in-uk-capital-netizens-react/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.cityoflondon.police.uk/news/city-of-london/news/2025/may/city-of-london-police-tactics-preventing-phone-theft/> - In May 2025, the City of London Police reported a nearly 30% reduction in phone snatching incidents within the first four months of the year compared to the same period in 2024. This improvement is attributed to proactive measures such as increased police visibility in high-risk areas, the introduction of Operation Swipe, and the deployment of dedicated resources monitoring CCTV to deter and apprehend phone thieves. These efforts aim to make the City a less attractive target for phone snatchers and enhance public safety.
3. <https://www.cityoflondon.police.uk/news/city-of-london/news/2025/april/city-of-london-police-launch-new-initiatives-to-tackle-phone-snatching-as-new-three-year-policing-plan-published/> - In April 2025, the City of London Police unveiled a new three-year policing plan focusing on tackling phone snatching. As part of this initiative, the police began marking streets with blue circular paint where phone thefts have occurred, serving as a deterrent and raising public awareness. This strategy reflects a commitment to innovative approaches in crime prevention and aligns with the force's vision of becoming a trusted and inclusive service dedicated to public safety.
4. <https://www.thenationalnews.com/news/uk/2025/02/06/police-seize-1000-stolen-phones-in-london-crackdown-on-tourist-hotspot-crime/> - In February 2025, the Metropolitan Police in London conducted a significant crackdown on mobile phone thefts, seizing over 1,000 stolen phones and arresting 230 individuals within a week. The operation targeted high-crime areas, including the West End and Westminster, employing plain-clothes officers and tracking technology to recover stolen devices and apprehend offenders. This initiative aimed to address the £50 million-a-year trade in stolen phones and enhance public safety in popular tourist spots.
5. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c4g39ldprr3o> - In February 2025, the Metropolitan Police intensified efforts to combat mobile phone snatching in London, resulting in 230 arrests and the recovery of over 1,000 handsets within a week. The crackdown focused on high-crime areas such as the West End and Westminster, deploying plain-clothes officers and utilizing tracking technology. This initiative aimed to address the £50 million-a-year trade in stolen phones and improve public safety in the capital.
6. <https://www.thenationalnews.com/news/uk/2024/12/27/phone-theft-hotspots-in-london-revealed-as-crime-reaches-epidemic-level/> - In December 2024, reports highlighted a surge in mobile phone thefts in central London, particularly in upscale and tourist-frequented areas. Criminals often used electric bikes to stealthily approach victims and snatch phones from their hands. The Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, pledged a crackdown on this 'epidemic' level of crime, with police data indicating that approximately 69% of all thefts in the city were related to mobile phones, amounting to about 185,000 stolen devices.
7. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/snatch-theft-london-police-taking-measures-to-curb-phone-stealing/3397957> - In November 2024, London's streets faced a surge in 'snatch theft,' with phones being a primary target. Reports indicated that an estimated 78,000 people had their phones or bags grabbed in the city that year. To combat this, authorities advised residents to have their handsets marked with unique QR codes and registered in a secure official database. This initiative aimed to raise public awareness and assist in recovering stolen phones, reflecting a concerted effort to curb the rising crime.