

Mental Health Issues Cannot Be Solved by the Police

That is true in Denmark or anywhere else in the world.



Image by [Josh Clifford](#) from [Pixabay](#)

I find it very sad, that yet another shooting occupies my mind. This time, it happened in Denmark, the country I would call my second home. Unfortunately, also this time teenagers are among the victims. We do not know anything about motives. And before speculating, I would rather let the police do the investigation work in peace. But we do know, that the shooter had known mental health issues.

I have worked many years as a special needs teacher. Over the course of the years, I have met many students with severe mental health issues. And I can say that there does not always need to be a motive for violent behavior. At least not in the rational sense we imagine.

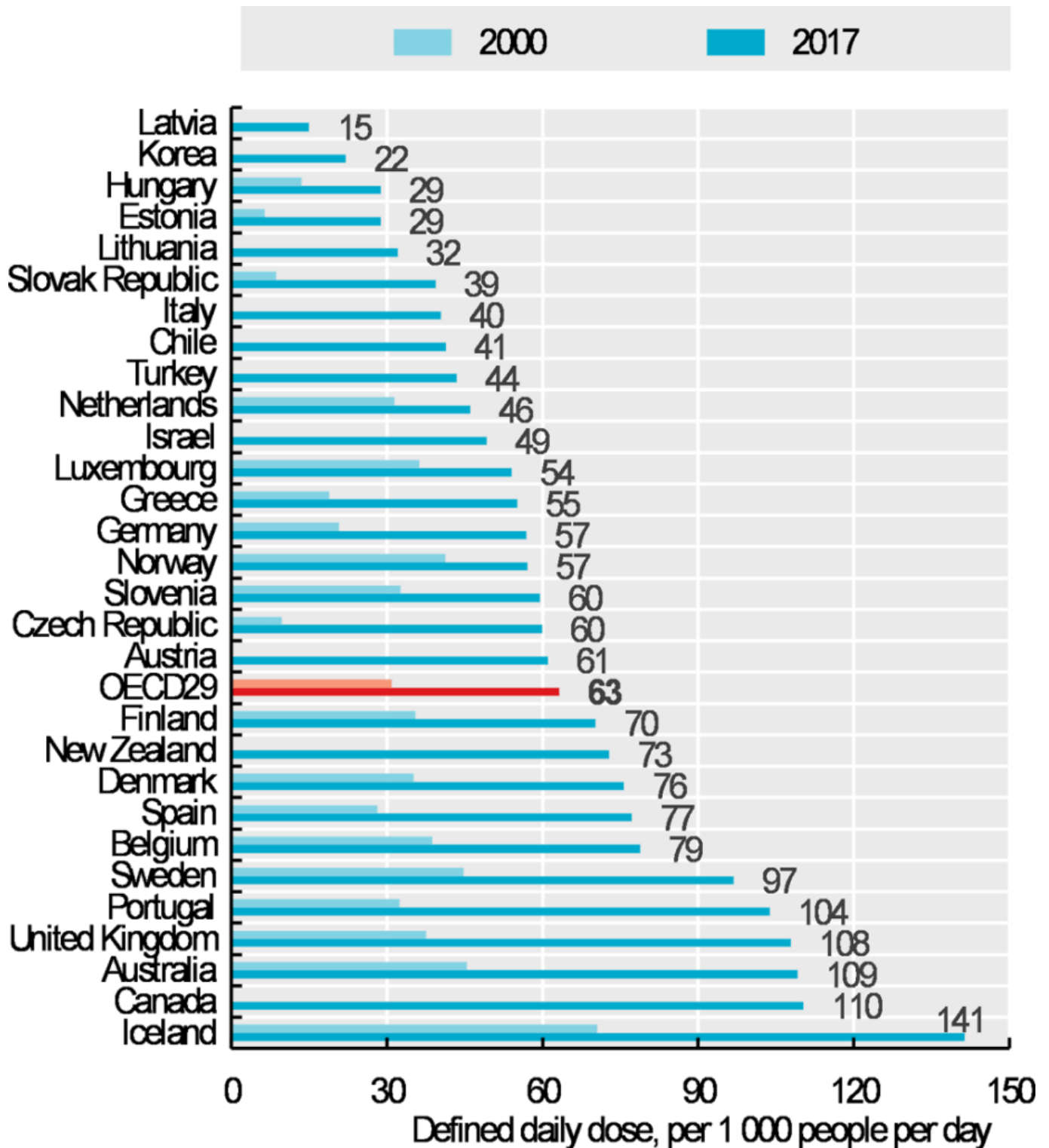
This is why mental health issues should not go untreated for a long time. There can be serious consequences. And it is why it is a dumb idea to let

weapons circulate freely in a society. In Denmark an occurrence like this is rare. One of the main reasons for it is, that people cannot just go into a supermarket and buy a gun. But from time to time, the system fails. Even in a well-developed welfare state like Denmark.

In 2019, the Danish Ministry of Justice issued a report that offered severe criticism of psychiatric care in Denmark. The report stated, that 90% of convicted felons received inadequate psychiatric care before they were charged with a crime. 6 of them had committed murder.

Denmark's Health System Struggles With Providing Adequate Care for Mental Health Issues

This is the inconvenient truth. Yes, Denmark has been cited as the happiest nation on earth. Denmark's per-capita consumption of antidepressants is also significantly above the OECD average.



Source: OECD Health Statistics 2019. [OECDiLibrary](#)

That might be due to the fact, that more patients receive treatment. But it may also point to that something is rotten in the state of Denmark.

One of the reasons I left the special needs sector was because of this. The number of young people with mental health issues never stopped. They kept rising. And many of my students suffered from more severe issues. I felt more and more powerless. It was a constant fight against the system. A system that refused to provide resources to care for my student's mental health.

I met teenage girls with severe depression. They wouldn't even leave the bed anymore. I also met boys that locked themselves in their rooms to play video games all day. They never came out. Not even for meals.

In the end, I threw in the towel. My own mental health was deteriorating fast. I tried more than once to get turned away by psychiatric emergency wards. They refused to admit students with acute breakdowns. Sometimes, we called the police, so they would force the issue. More often than not, they were released after a few hours. Then the whole situation started over. I cannot count the times I stayed awake at night and was ready to intervene when the next breakdown would come.

The Police Are Not Equipped to Deal With These Issues

The police were not better equipped to provide adequate care. But if they took the students to the emergency ward, they could not refuse them. And they could provide some much-needed protection for me and my colleagues. For when the situation really got out of hand. Some police officers were very empathetic and had great people skills. Others made the situation worse by escalating the situation unnecessarily. I do not blame them. It is not their job to treat people with mental health issues. Their job is to keep peace and uphold the law.

It is a neverending struggle. Because there are not enough resources to go around. Somehow, there are always enough resources to buy military equipment. But never to actually take care of the mental health of citizens. The result is that some people fall through the cracks. And if they have access to guns, the outcome is exactly as we saw yesterday.