

Industrial (1750 -1900) crime and punishment knowledge organiser

Trend in crime rate

1750 - 1800 - Gradual increase in crime rate. Sharp rise in crime from 1815. Continues to slowly rise until 1850. Gradual fall in crime rate 1850 - 1900 but not lower than pre 1815.

Most common crime is petty theft.

Violent crime was rare - Only 10% Murder rate was low. Murder victims usually knew their killer.

Some professional criminals who planned crime but most was opportunistic and committed by first time offenders. Poor people who had been driven to crime through desperation.

Around 3 in 4 offenders were male. Usually young men in teens and twenties. Most common offence for women was prostitution.

Crimes - 1750 - 1900

Social and economic change caused by Industrial revolution has a huge impact on crime, particularly theft. Factories, warehouses and shops are full of goods to be stolen. Theft from work becomes more common. Hundreds of banks open and become targets. Middle class homes are full of possessions.

New crimes: Fare-dodging and vandalism of new railways, stealing water from standpipes owned by water companies, failing to send children to school (after 1870). Corrupt bankers and businessmen also embezzled money.

Period overview

1750 - 1850 The Industrial Revolution.

Population 1750 - 6 million → 1900 - 37 million.

Mass urbanisation. By 1850 more people lived in towns and cities than in the countryside.

Industrialisation made the gap between the rich and poor even bigger. Rich lived in the suburbs in large houses. The poor lived in the centre of cities in slums.

Slums were crowded. The Govmt. also offered no welfare support for unemployed. Drunkenness was still a problem.

The Enlightenment - Philosophers and scientists began to discuss and change ideas on what it meant to be human.

In 1886 Britain had an empire that stretched from Canada to Australia. Ruling over countries such as India and South Africa. By 1900 Britain ruled a quarter of the world's population.

1830s and 40s a rail network was built across Britain.

1870 - Education act makes school compulsory for children up to 10. More people can read. Newspapers began to publish crime stories.

Working class men began to demand the right to vote and changes to parliament.

Why did crime increase in the early nineteenth century?

Rapid rise in population after 1750 means many more potential offenders and victims.

Growth of industry and trade means there were more goods for people to steal.

City centres became over crowded so assault became more common. Poor lodging houses crammed together made it easier to steal people's possessions. Crowded neighbourhoods were more difficult to police.

Poverty and the distress people faced during times of high unemployment created a steep rise in crime.

In 1815 the Napoleonic wars ended and thousands of soldiers returned to Britain without work. Between 1815 and 1822 wages fell by 1/3. The rising price of bread also added to the distress of labouring families.

Nineteenth century views on crime

Some 'radical thinkers' made the link between poverty and crime. They argued that the poor environment which many children grew up in was the main cause of crime. They placed an emphasis on the lack of religion, education and useful work.

Many middle class people often blamed the bad moral habits of the poor, the worst being drunkenness. A number of people joined the Temperance movement.

Some people took a harsh view on criminals. In their view poor people made a deliberate choice to become criminals instead of working. Some people argued that there was a particular group of poor people called the 'criminal class' and that children born in to these families would inherit criminal tendencies from their parents. Others argued that there was a criminal type and could be identified by their physical features.

Publications featuring gruesome details of crime and murders were punished. Some campaigners claimed these were influencing young people.

Changes in law enforcement

1750 - Law enforcement was still based on Medieval and Early Modern methods.

Later 18th century limitations of policing became clear. Especially in towns where rapid population growth led to increases in crime.

1750s John and Henry Fielding set up Bow Street Runners. They were paid to patrol London's streets at night. By 1800 68 men formed the Bow Street patrol.

1773 - Hue and Cry newspaper is started. Details of crime from all over the country are printed in it.

1829 - Robert Peel sets up first police force. Known as 'Bobbies' or 'Peelers.'

The first police force

Many people had been originally opposed to a police force for a number of reasons. They believed it would cost too much, they did not think it was the job of the government to set up and control a police force, they feared a large force could be used by the government to control the population.

Why was it created?

Crime had increased, growth of towns had made the old law enforcement system ineffective, people feared a revolution, the government had become more involved in people's lives through tax.

Developments after 1829

1867 - telegraph used to speed up communication, 1880s - detectives take pictures of crime scenes

Capital punishment

A number of changes to capital punishment. 1780s hangings were moved inside and a more humane form of hanging known as the 'new drop' was introduced - A trap door opened and the person fell through. There were also fewer executions 1800-09 871, 1830-39 297.

1832 - 1837 the government removed a number of capital offences such as sheep, cattle and horse theft (1832), letter stealing (1834), forgery and coining (1836), arson, burglary and theft from a house (1837)

1872 - Long drop is introduced. - Exact amount of rope to snap the neck is calculated. During the 1870s, the 'long drop' was gradually introduced by gaols across Britain.

Transportation

1750 - People who did not deserve the death penalty were transported to America and forced to work on plantations. In 1776 America gained independence so this was no longer possible.

At first the government imprisoned people on 'hulks' but these were crowded and filthy and many people died of diseases such as dysentery and typhus.

The government began transporting people to Australia for a number of reasons: Australia was an unknown place on the other side of the world - being transported there may deter potential criminals. Transportation got rid of people from the 'criminal classes' and would therefore reduce crime. The convicts would provide the Labour needed to build Britain's new territory.

May 1787 - The first 11 ships, carrying 736 convicts set off for Australia. Eight months later they arrived in Botany Bay. 48 convicts died on the journey.

Between 1787 and 1868 around 160,000 convicts were transported to Australia.

Transportation reached a peak in the 1830s when 5000 people a year were sent to the convict colony.

The convict colony

80% of convicts had stolen food, clothing or items of small value. The average age of a prisoner was 26 although some were as young as 11.

Some of the people transported were political prisoners such as the Tolpuddle Martyrs.

All convicts who were transported received 7 years, 14 years or a lifetime of hard Labour. Convicts worked in gangs digging ditches, felling trees, planting crops, putting up buildings and constructing roads. They would often work with heavy chains around their ankles. At night they were locked up in convict barracks. Road-building gangs slept in prison huts on wheels which were dragged behind them as the roads were made. The colony was based on harsh punishment.

Convicts who broke the rules were given 25, 50 or 100 lashes. Some convicts tried to escape but few survived long in the harsh environment. Prisoners who had served their sentence usually worked for one of the free settlers. Few could ever afford the journey home.

1830s Criticisms of transportation: Conditions on the ships and in colonies was cruel and inhumane, it could be seen as a soft option as a new life could be started after, authorities in Australia complained about the dumping of criminals. 1840s onwards fewer convicts transported. Stops in 1868.

Prisons

Hangings began to decline after 1800, fewer people were transported, prison became the most important form of punishment. 1750 prisons were grim places. After 1770 some people began to campaign for the reform of prisons. John Howard - High Sheriff of Bedfordshire 1773. Shocked by the state of the county gaol. Gave evidence to the House of Commons in 1774 to help support two new laws. - The Discharged Prisoners Act. (Abolished the fee that prisoners were expected to pay before release.) The Health of Prisoners Act. (Prisoners should be regularly cleaned and washed.)

Elizabeth Fry - 1813 visited the women's section of Newgate prison. She was horrified with what she saw. 1816 she created a small school in the women's section of the prison, persuaded the prison authorities to divide the women in to small groups who were overseen by a matron, read to from the Bible and given equipment for sewing. Her reforms only occurred in one prison but she wrote about them and this had wider influence.

1823 Gaols Act - Each category of prisoner should have their own area, women prisoners to be supervised by women warders, Governors, surgeons and chaplains should visit prisoners regularly, each prisoner should have a separate sleeping cell.

Separate system - Prisoners kept in individual cells where they worked, prayed and reflected on their crimes. They only left their cells for church services and exercise. Many prisoners were driven to despair from loneliness.

From 1850s Silent system - Some people thought separate system was too expensive. Prisoners were allowed to work together but had to be silent. They were given pointless work such as the treadmill and crank.