

20th Century crime and punishment knowledge organiser

Trend in crime rate - 1900 - 1955

For the first quarter of the century, crime continued much as it had before 1900. In the late 1920s and 30s, Britain faced severe economic problems and this led to a rise in crime.

Crime dropped at the start of WW2. The following year it rose steeply again. During the Blitz 1940-41, criminals looted houses and even robbed bodies of jewellery and cash. The stolen goods were often sold on the black market. This continued until rationing ended in 1954.

After 1955 there was a significant rise in crime. There was also a rise in violent crime. There was a decline in murders but this is largely explained by improvements in medicine.

Crimes - 1955 - present

Car crime - 1895 - Speed limit of cars had been introduced.

1967 - A limit on the amount of alcohol allowed in a driver's bloodstream. Police could stop motorists for breathalyser tests.

1983 - Drivers had to wear seat belts. 1991 - Compulsory for all passengers to wear them.

1992 - Fixed roadside cameras used to capture images of cars speeding.

Road deaths in Britain have fallen steadily since 1960. Cars were often stolen. Since the 1990s, car locks of have improved and thefts have reduced.

Crimes - 1955 - present

Football hooliganism - Ever since the Middle Ages, football has been associated with crowd violence. The problem reached a peak in the 1970s and 1980s.

In 1984, Liverpool fans rioted at a European cup final match. In the chaos a wall collapsed and 39 people died. This led to big changes in security at matches. Since the late 1980s police used CCTV to identify dangerous fans. Grounds are equipped with seats so that the number of fans is limited. Fans that cause violence can be banned from games. As ticket prices have soared most fans come from wealthier backgrounds. Football-related violence does still happen but it usually takes place away from the stadium at pubs or motorway service stations.

Race, religion and hate crimes - The sudden arrival of thousands of Commonwealth immigrants after the end of WW2 came as a shock to many British people. Responses ranged from cold indifference to physical violence. From the 1960s, governments passed laws to try to ensure all British citizens had equal rights. Race Relation Acts were passed in 1965, 1968 and 1976. Despite passing laws violence still continued. In 1998 and 2003, Parliament created a new category of offence known as 'hate crimes.' If a crime had occurred out of hatred due to race, gender, sexuality, religion or disability the judge had to make the sentence more severe.

Crimes - 1955 - present

Drug crime - In the early years of WW1 families could buy packs of cocaine to send to soldiers serving overseas. The army reported it was causing problems so the government banned its use by soldiers in 1916. It was still legal for civilians until 1920, when opium and cocaine became controlled substances.

Britain's serious problem with drug use started in the 1960s. By then, it was on the rise and associated with popular culture. In 1971 Parliament tried to end the growing drug culture with a sweeping ban and severe punishments. Drugs were classified in to categories. Supplying

Class A drugs was a 14 year prison sentence. 1985 - became a life sentence. Addicts often resort to stealing to buy drugs. Organised gangs make billions of pounds from smuggling and distributing illegal drugs. Governments regularly seek new methods to tackle the 'war on drugs' but none seem to work. They also struggle to keep up with new chemical mixtures that are initially classified as 'legal highs.' As soon as one of these is banned, a new drug appears.

Crimes 1955 - present

Cyber crime - Emergence of the internet in 1990 turned many law-abiding citizens into criminals, as downloading films and music from illegal websites did not seem like shoplifting.

Criminals can now steal by using 'phishing' emails to gain online trade and banking details. Cyber criminals also hack into government and large business computer systems and threaten to crash them if they are not paid large sums of money. Some hackers do it for the pleasure of watching the impact of their crime.

Makers of cyber security do all they can but they are always behind the hackers.

In 2015, when cyber crime was first introduced in Britain's national crime statistics, the crime rate more than doubled on the previous year's figures. Some say this explains why the crime rate had seemed to be falling in recent years: criminals were moving away from traditional forms of crime and moving into cyber crime.

Developments in the police force from 1900

The first 50 or 60 years of the 20th century were called the 'Golden age' of policing. In the years after 1970, that respect was eroded and in 2005, only 58% of the population said they trusted the police to tell the truth. The public now feel more distanced from the police. Some say this is largely caused by:

Police cars - Far fewer police walking the streets, they are now in patrol cars as they have far larger areas to cover in the past.

Traffic offences - Otherwise law-abiding citizens resent being caught speeding or using mobile phones whilst driving.

Crowd control - The police sometimes have to deal with enormous crowds. When all goes well their presence often goes unnoticed but when things go badly such as during the miners' strikes in the 80s the police were shown on television using extreme and apparently unnecessary force.

Corruption - In the 1980s a report showed serious corruption in the West Midlands serious Crime Squad. In 2014 West Yorkshire police admitted covering up their mistakes at the 1989 Hillsborough football disaster.

Developments in policing

In 1964, an Act of Parliament reduced the local control of policing. There are now only 43, in England and Wales. Since 2013, Scotland has just one national police force.

By 2000, recruits could be male or female. 226 women police officers in 1939 and 37,000 in 2008. Today, only 4% of police officers are from ethnic minority groups.

In 1900 officers received little or no training. In 1947, a National Police Training College was set up.

From Medieval times, British policing has always been based on the consent of local people. The modern force tries to keep this alive by visiting local schools and encouraging the Neighbourhood Watch scheme, rather like a modern version of the hue and cry.

From 1900 - 2000, British police on the beat never carried firearms. Since then some officers patrolling estates with gun problems have been armed but it is very rare. Truncheons have been used since the nineteenth century but officers may now use pepper spray or tasers. Only about 5% of all police officers are qualified to use firearms. They are usually only called out in an emergency.

New technology 1901 - Discovery of different types of blood groups, used to identify criminals. 1902 - Fingerprints first used in a British court. 1984 - Biggest breakthrough came with the discovery that each person's DNA is unique.

Digital technology can now be used to check car registration plates on a central database. CCTV, drones and surveillance on communication is now used.

The courts

The Courts Act of 1971 swept away the assizes, the quarter sessions and other ancient local courts that had been operating since the Middle Ages. It replaced them all with a new Crown Court. In theory, it is a single court but it sits in over ninety location around the country. Judges hear the most serious cases in these courts. Less serious crimes are heard by magistrates in the Magistrate's court. The workings of all these courts are organised under the Ministry of Justice.

Women given the vote in 1918, 1919 Sex Disqualification Act passed, 1920 Ada Summers in Stalybridge became the first ever woman JP (magistrate).

1908 - Juvenile courts introduced where children between the ages of 7 and 16 were to be tried.

Since 1974 no property restrictions of who can sit on a jury.

In the 19th century the police took the responsibility of bringing a case to court from the victim. In 1986 that role was taken on by the Crown Prosecution Service.

Punishment

Corporal punishment

1933 - Ended for all young offenders.

1948 - Ended as a punishment for all offenders

1962 - Ended as a punishment for prisoners who misbehaved in prison.

Capital Punishment

1908 - No one under the age of 16 could be executed.

1957 - Parliament ended capital punishment for all murders except where a police officer was the victim, a gun was used or the person was resisting arrest.

1965 - Parliament passed the Abolition of the Death penalty Act but only for up to five years to test its effects.

1969 - Parliament permanently abolished the death penalty for all murders.

Prisons

1902 - Young offenders up to the age of 21 went to their own type of prisons known as 'borstals.' 1988 - Borstals replaced by young offender institutions.

1908 - Parliament set the age for which a child could be held responsible for a crime at 7. It is now 10.

1896 - A separate prison for people who were mentally ill was set up - Broadmoor Hospital.

Changes to prisons 1922 - Silent rule was relaxed, did not have to have their heads shaved, arrows on the prisoners uniforms were removed, educational work in prisons was greatly increased, prisoners did more meaningful work, prisoners were paid a small sum for the work they did.

Criminal Justice Act 1948 - prisoners could be kept in prison longer than their original sentence if releasing them might endanger society.

Prison problems - Prison population has risen steeply since the mid 1940s. Governments tried to improve space and conditions by building more than 25 new prisons between 1985 and 2006.

Alternatives to prison - 1907 - Probation service introduced. 1967 - Parole system introduced, allows prisoners to be released before their sentence but only if they have behaved well. Sometimes they are made to wear electronic tags.

1972 - Community Service order introduced.