

A level Sociology

Crime and deviance: Social groups

Criminal activity by age

Young people are convicted of more crime than adults. The peak age is 18 for men and 15 for women. However, young people are also more likely to be victims of crime. Statistics show that more young people are caught compared to older people as their crime is more visible, e.g. vandalism, whereas older people are more likely to commit white-collar crimes (especially older people from the middle-class).

Many argue that these factors could be due to stereotypes and negative labelling of young people by agents of socialisation, such as the media. Young people are more likely to be members of deviant subcultures.

More young people are convicted as they cannot afford the more expensive lawyers and barristers.

Criminal activity by area

Urban areas are more likely to see high levels of criminal activity compared to rural areas, with inner cities having the higher numbers.

Rural areas are mostly close-knit communities where people know each other and have social bonds (**Hirschi**) and therefore are less likely to commit crimes against people they know. Also, if living in rural areas, people are more likely to recognise strangers, whereas people do not create the same relationships when living in a city.

There are more opportunities to commit crimes in cities, such as robbery and property theft, along with young people creating subcultures in deprived areas of the city.

Criminal activity by gender

More men are convicted than women. This could be due to the way that they are socialised, i.e. boys are given more freedom and are thrill seeking while girls are taught to be quiet, to conform and are supervised closely (**Abbott** and **Wallace**). This is supported by **Heidensohn**.

Also, **Miller** argues that it is the culture and lifestyle of young men that encourages behaviour that leads to crime.

Marsh argues that men have more opportunities to commit crime and where women also have the same opportunities, they tend not to break rules/laws.

Feminists argue that there is an underestimation of female crime due to the **chivalry thesis** (**Pollack**).

Campbell's study discovered that there are far more crimes committed by women than are recorded.

Katz argues that boys are more likely to be thrill seekers, therefore are seduced by crime.

Lyng argues that young men like to live on the edge (**edgework**).

Criminal activity by ethnicity

The **Macpherson Report** recognised that the criminal justice system is institutionally racist and therefore more likely to convict people from ethnic minority groups. This can also be seen in the book written by **Hall et al**: *Policing the Crisis: Stop and Search policy*.

Hall et al argue that Black people have been labelled as criminal and used as scapegoats in the UK – **Gilroy** supports this view.

Hall et al also argue that high unemployment amongst ethnic minority groups causes deprivation and the temptation by young people of these groups to commit crimes. However, **RIGHT REALISTS** argue that it is the subcultures and/or gangs they create and belong to that result in criminal activity.

Ethnic minority groups are also more likely to be victims of crime, e.g. Pakistani and Bangladeshi people are likely to suffer burglary. Members of ethnic minority groups are also more worried about crime than mainstream White groups.

Criminal activity by class

More working-class/underclass people are convicted and in prison compared to middle/upper-classes (for reasons, see white collar crime).

Marxism believes that the legal system is biased towards the ruling classes, whilst criminalising the lower classes.

Subculturalists, e.g. **Miller**, argue young, working-class males are often associated with crimes as an accepted or rewarding activity, whereas they are not able to achieve such rewards in other ways.

Middle-classes are treated more leniently, e.g. fraud is not visible and goes undetected – people's responses are not so harsh as it is usually 'victimless'.

**Don't forget criticism
– this is also important for the exam!**