

Religious Attitudes to Crime and Punishment

It is difficult to accurately measure the amount of crime due to a 'dark figure', this is the difference between the number of crimes committed and the number of crimes reported. However the number of crimes reported peaked in 1995 at around 19 million, this number has now decreased and it is thought that the majority of 10-25 year olds follow the law. However around 6% are classed as repeat offenders. Do these figures show that there is something about human nature-maybe greed or selfishness- that makes us all capable of crime and wrong doing?

| Religious attitudes to crime | |
|---|--|
| Christianity | Buddhism |
| <p>"A man reaps what he sows" This means that a person must take responsibility for their own actions. Most Christians believe criminals should be punished but also forgiven and given a second chance "If they sin against you 7 times and come back saying 'I repent' , you must forgive them".</p> <p>Christians believe in stopping the causes of crime and are encouraged to be law abiding citizens.</p> | <p>Buddhists believe in Karma, their actions will have consequences.</p> <p>Justice will always be done, in this life or the next.</p> |

Duty

A moral/legal obligation
(need to do something)

Responsibility

A duty of care for or
having control over
someone or something.

Conscience

Inner feeling of doing
right or wrong (some
feel it is from God)

Repentance

Being sorry and wanted
to change

Causes of Crime

Social Reasons: most young people in prison have been excluded from school and lack education and qualifications. . Breaking the law can give a buzz and they may feel like they have achieved something. Abusive parents, broken homes and poor role models mean young people don't understand acceptable behaviour. Boredom can lead to crime and a feeling of wanting to get their own back on society. Drug and alcohol addiction can lead to shop lifting, burglary and prostitution.

Environmental Reasons: Unemployment leads to higher crime rates. Rivalry between gangs lead people to carry guns and knives. Those from deprived backgrounds may live in uncared for areas which encourage criminal behaviour.

Psychological Reasons: Mental illness is common in many people in prison. Some say humans are naturally selfish and greedy and want wealth and power. Violence on TV has been linked to violent crime.

Civil and Criminal Law

Civil Law: Arguments between individuals or groups. Cases go to a small claims court or high court if more serious. These include Wills, divorces etc.

Criminal Law: This is when the state law has been broken. Cases involve the police and crown prosecution services (less serious ones go to a magistrates court) Serious crimes go to crown court where a jury listen to the evidence and the judge then decides if a person is innocent or guilty.

Types of Crime

Non-indictable offences: less serious like speeding fines, a person is not sent to prison for these types of offences.

Indictable offences: Serious crimes like rape and murder, people are often sent to prison for these types of crimes.

Crime against the person: Wrong doing that directly harms another person. (Murder, assault)

Crime against Property: Damaging items that belong to someone else. (vandalism, burglary etc)

Crimes against the state: Offences that aim to damage a government or country. (treason, terrorist activity, selling secrets)

Religious Offence: An offence against a religion. (Blasphemy-insulting God) Religions also have their own laws (10 commandments in Christianity)

Aims of Punishment

Punishment: Something done to a person because they have broken the law.

Protection: Keeping the public safe from being harmed, threatened or injured by criminals.

Retribution: Getting even with those who have committed crimes. 'an eye for an eye'.

Deterrence: To put people off of committing crimes.

Reformation: To change someone's behaviour for the better. Helping criminals understand where they went wrong so they don't commit crimes again.

Vindication: This shows that criminals must be punished to show that the law is right and should be respected.

Reparation: Criminals are asked to do something to make up for their crimes and give something back to society. (community service).

Religious attitudes to aims of punishment

| Christianity | Buddhism |
|--|--|
| <p>Most Christians do not support retribution (revenge).</p> <p>Christians believe that laws are to be upheld (vindication) and they believe in removing the causes of crime (unemployment, poverty, education).</p> <p>The most important aim is reformation, they believe that criminals should repent (say sorry) and be punished and forgiven.</p> | <p>Buddhists believe it is important to protect society from criminals but do not agree with retribution. Revenge goes against Metta and Karuna (Love and compassion).</p> <p>Cruel punishment damages the mind of the criminal and the person giving the punishment. The most important thing is reformation, this would be keeping the 5 precepts.</p> <p>Reparation is important, criminal activity leads to bad Karma, so making amends helps society and the person who broke the law by gaining good Karma.</p> |

Young Offenders

In Britain a person is legally a minor until the age of 18 when, when they are given full rights and responsibilities of an adult. Anyone under 18 who commits a crime is called a young Offender. Minor offences are sorted by police (warnings, ASBOs,). More serious crimes go to the youth court division of a magistrates court. If found guilty they may be fined, given a reparation order (fix damage caused) or receive a curfew (set time to be home). More serious offences may result in being sent to 1 of 3 three places (secure training centre-focus on education and rehabilitation, secure children's homes-run by social services and focus on physical, emotional and behavioural needs or young offenders institutions-run by prison services and are for 15-21 yr olds).

Prison

FOR

- **Protect** society from dangerous/violent criminals.
- **Isolate** those who deserve punishment from their families/friends (retribution).
- **Stop people reoffending** (because they are locked up)
- To act as a **deterrent** to others and ensure the law is respected (vindication)
- To give criminals a chance to reflect on what they did and change (**reformation**).

AGAINST

- **Expensive** (£30,000 a year to keep someone in prison).
- **'Schools for crime'** - prisoners educate each other in criminal methods
- Breed **resentment**, bitterness and determination to get back at society
- Most prisoners **re-offend**, so the system doesn't change people
- A prison record makes it **hard to get a job**, which could cause a person to commit crime again.
- Offenders **families suffer**
- **Relationships breakdown**

Religious Views

All religions accept the need for prisons, they deprive criminals of their freedom and prevent them from continuing a life of crime. Religions support reform so that criminals become responsible citizens, they support education and medical programs.

Christians have been actively involved in prison reform-a movement that tries to ensure that prisoners are treated humanely while in prison. Christian chaplains visit prisons and take inspiration from the parable of the sheep and goats (teaching about judgement).

Capital Punishment-Death Penalty abolished in 1965

FOR

- **Retribution**-terrorist and murderers deserve to die 'A life for a life'
- **Deterrence**-death penalty stops people committing horrid crimes because if they are caught they will be killed
- **Protection**-public needs protection from dangerous criminals, however those sentenced to life are often let out after 15 years
- **Finance**-it costs tax payers thousands to keep criminals alive in prison.

AGAINST

- **Mistakes**- innocent people have been executed
- **Protection**-putting a murderer in prison protects society
- **Deterrence**-there is no evidence that the death penalty is more of a deterrent than life in prison
- **Reformation**- reformed criminals can be a big influence for good
- **Right**-Only God has the right to take a person's life

Religious Views

Christianity: Some support the death penalty "**whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall have his blood shed**". They see the death penalty as a **deterrent** that prevents serious crime. Others doubt that it's a deterrent and oppose it because **mistakes can happen** and **innocent people could die**, it also **prevents repentance**. They also believe **only God can take a life**.

Buddhists: The death penalty goes against The **1st Precept** (not to harm any living being) and **Karuna** (compassion). However in some Buddhist countries (Thailand and Bhutan) the death penalty exists as it serves as a **deterrent**.

Forms of Punishment

| | |
|--|---|
| Community Service: Unpaid work that is performed for the benefit of the local community, instead of going to prison. | Electronic Tagging: An offender has to wear a tag which tracks their movement to ensure restrictions are observed. |
| Fines: Money paid as a punishment. | Probation: Alternative to prison where they meet regularly with a probation officer to ensure they do not reoffend. Movement may be restricted. |
| Parole: A prisoner is released from prison without serving the whole sentence because of good behaviour. The prisoner is monitored to ensure they don't reoffend. | Life Imprisonment: a sentence that keeps a person in prison for the remainder of their life (some may die in prison). |
| Early Release: When a prisoner is released without having completed their sentence or fulfilled the criteria for parole. Good behaviour, reformed. | Prison Reform: Elizabeth Fry (Quaker) fought to improve conditions in Newgate Womens prison. People are concerned about over crowding which hinders reform and they believe prison should only be for the most severe criminals. |

Past Questions

Knowledge and Understanding Questions

- Explain briefly what is meant by Repentance. [2 marks]
- Explain why many religious believers agree with the use of prison to punish offenders. [3 marks]
- Explain religious attitudes to offences. Refer to religious beliefs and teachings in your answer. [4 marks]
- Explain the difference between prison and community service. [3 marks]
- Explain religious attitudes to the use of retribution in punishing offenders. Refer to beliefs and teachings [4 marks]
- Explain briefly what is meant by deterrence. [2 marks]
- Give 2 reasons why some people break the law. [2 marks]
- Explain briefly what is meant by the term probation. [2 marks]
- Explain religious attitudes to the use of the death penalty (capital punishment). Refer to beliefs and teachings [5 marks]
- Give one example of a religious offence. [1 mark]
- Explain religious attitudes to how young offenders should be punished. Refer to beliefs and teachings [5 marks]
- Explain why many religious believers think people have a duty to follow the law. [3 marks]

Evaluation Questions

3 mark questions (What do you think? Explain your opinion)

- 'Religious believers should always follow their conscience'
- 'people who commit religious offences should be punished severely'
- 'Religious believers should support the early release of prisoners.'
- 'Religion teaches people the difference between right and wrong'

6 mark questions (Do you agree? Give reasons for your answer showing that you have thought about more than one point of view. Refer to religious arguments in your answer.)

- 'Reformation is the most important aim of punishment'
- 'If people were religious they would not break the law'
- 'Crime against a person is the worst type of crime'
- 'The death penalty (capital punishment) should never be used'