

Daily Mail

VIOLENT CRIME

WORSE IN BRITAIN

THAN IN US

by

Michael Clarke

Feb 2001

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-25671/Violent-crime-worse-Britain-US.html>

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Britain has a higher crime rate than any other rich nation except Australia, according to a survey yesterday.

The chances of having your car stolen are greater in England and Wales than anywhere else in the developed world, it said.

The international crime report was published as Tony Blair prepared to unveil plans to tackle persistent offenders.

The Prime Minister [Tony Blair] - who will next week become the first serving premier to visit a British prison when he launches his law-and-order package - said the crackdown would target the 100,000 worst offenders who are responsible for the bulk of crimes.

He is to announce a £700 million programme - described by senior government sources as 'very radical' - in a bid to win back the initiative in the law and order debate in the runup to the general election expected in May.

According to the figures released yesterday, 3.6 per cent of the population of England and Wales were victims of violent crime in 1999 - second only to Australia, where the figure was 4.1 per cent. Scotland had a slightly lower rate of violence, at 3.4 per cent.

In the U.S., only 2 per cent of the population suffered an assault or robbery.

One in 40 people in England and Wales had their cars stolen in 1999, the highest rate in the 17 developed countries examined.

Just one in 200 Americans suffered a car theft while in Japan there was only one per 1,000 of the population.

The study looked at crime rates in 12 western European countries plus Poland, Canada, the U.S., Australia and Japan.

The chances of becoming a victim of any crime in England and Wales were second only to Australia.

Here, 26 per cent suffered from crime against an average across all the countries of just 21 per cent.

England and Wales are among the countries 'most pressured by crime', the report concludes.

The two countries had the equal highest number of crimes per head of population of all 17 states.

There were 58 incidents for every 100 inhabitants in England and Wales - the same as Australia.

The study said the size of the sample meant first place in many categories came down to statistical accident, suggesting that for many areas of crime Britain may actually be worst in the world.

Its authors insisted the general rankings accurately reflect the real situation.

Home Secretary Jack Straw admitted the survey painted a bleak picture for Britain.

He said that after four years in power, Labour still had a mountain to climb to defeat crime. He added: 'Levels of victimisation are higher here than in most comparable countries for most categories of crime.'

'So, while I pay tribute to the police, councils and communities for their hard work in reducing crime over recent years, no one should be under any illusions about the challenges ahead.

'Crime may be falling but it is still too high, and we have a great deal more to do to make Britain a safer place in which to live.'

Shadow home secretary Ann Widdecombe said: 'It's no wonder the people of England and Wales have more chance of becoming victims of crime when there are over 2,500 fewer police, violent crime is soaring and 30,000 convicted prisoners have been let out before serving even half their sentences. 'Four years after the last election it is clear Labour have failed to be tough on crime as they promised they would be.'

Experts said one reason Britain had higher crime rates was because it had a higher population density.

More people living in cities - and more people living alone - gave greater opportunities for crimes like burglary, said Professor Michael Hough of South Bank University.

He said the apparently high crime rate in Australia could be due to a growing drug problem in Sydney, which is home to a fifth of the country's 19million population.

But the latest research is a big embarrassment to Labour.

Recent statistics show that, while overall crime in Britain is falling, violence, particularly street robbery, is rising sharply.

One of Labour's key election slogans during its 1997 election triumph was 'Tough on Crime, Tough on the Causes of Crime'.

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BRITISH CRIME LEVELS

'NOW WORSE THAN US'

by

MARIE WOOLF

Political Correspondent

11 Oct 1998

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/british-crime-levels-now-worse-than-us-1177553.html>

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BRITISH PEOPLE are more at risk of being robbed and mugged than those in the United States, according to a report now being studied by the Home Secretary.

The study, by a Cambridge University criminologist, found that while crime levels have fallen in the US since 1981, they have soared in Britain.

Robbery is now 1.4 times more common in the UK than on the other side of the Atlantic, while assaults are 2.3 times more likely.

The report shows that rates for burglary, assault and robbery have risen dramatically in the UK but dropped in the US. The findings are said to have shocked Jack Straw, the Home Secretary, who is analysing them.

The 100-page report challenges the traditional view that Britain is a safe place to live. It was compiled from surveys of thousands of victims and information from police, the prison services and courts on both sides of the Atlantic.

The research shows that the British burglary rate is now nearly double that of the US and theft of motor vehicles in the UK has risen by 100 per cent since 1981.

But America, the gun capital of the world, is still more dangerous than Britain in terms of rapes and murders, although the gap is narrowing. In 1981, the chance of being murdered in the US was nearly nine times higher than in Britain. By 1995, the latest year for which figures were available, the US rate was less than six times greater. The chances of being raped have risen continuously in Britain while in the US they have lessened.

The report, by criminologist Professor David Farrington of Cambridge University and Patrick Langan, a senior statistician at the US Department of Justice, blames the leniency of police towards suspects and the reluctance of the legal system to convict criminals and jail them, for the rise in crime.

It says a major factor in the rising crime rate has been the policy of Home Office personnel who have been "primarily concerned with reducing the prison population".

A spokesman for Mr Straw blamed the rising crime rate, detailed in the report, on Conservative policies on law and order. He said the report's findings over the 15 years from 1981 to 1995 coincided with Tory rule.

"The report is a graphic illustration of the failures of Tory law and order policy. In 18 years of their government you had a doubling of crime while convictions dropped by one third. There was a hugely widening gap," said an aide to the Home Secretary. "The risks of being caught have been declining. It goes to show why it is so important to reform the justice system."

Police figures out this week will show alarming increases in violent and sexual crimes in Britain during the last year.

The murder rate has risen by 26 per cent in London and 85 per cent in Northumbria.

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