

22.Crime and Punishment

The nation's per capita income has steadily grown, and educational opportunities have expanded, but its crime rate has also increased. In particular, juvenile delinquency is growing rapidly. If conditions are improving, why isn't criminality on the decline? The crime itself and its punishment are both costly. It not only destroys individual lives but entire families. The bill for confinement is also getting more expensive, and taxpayers are complaining about their money being used to support "welfare for lawbreakers."

What is the key factor in criminality? Genetics? Family problems? Social alienation? Peer pressure? Cultural upheavals caused by the switch-over from a traditional to a modern society? Drugs and/or alcohol? Lack of individual conscience and responsibility? The glorification of violence in the media? The phenomenon of copy-cat crimes?

While the cause of criminality is still inexplicable, the cure is necessarily even more so. Is better education the answer? Harsher punishment? More intrusive social intervention?

Comprehension

1. What is the unexpressed assumption in the first paragraph, and especially the first sentence?
2. What is the taxpayers complaint?
3. What are copy-cat crimes?

Your Opinion

1. What causes people to commit crimes?
2. How can criminality be reduced?
3. Have you ever broken the law? If so, what were the circumstances?
4. Is it fair to use public money to feed, house, and clothe criminals? Give them medical treatment and educational/ vocational opportunities?
5. Why is juvenile delinquency on the rise?





6. Are laws too permissive?
7. Do you think the punishment of a first-time offender should be commuted?
8. Should parents be responsible for their children's actions?
9. In what way (if any) is society responsible for criminality?
10. What is the most effective deterrent to heinous acts?

