

Types of crime

What is criminal law?

Crimes are usually defined by national criminal law. In the UK, crimes are defined by the criminal law of England and Wales. Criminal laws are different, however, in Scotland and Northern Ireland. This does not mean that different countries have totally different crimes; it just means countries have similar crimes but define them slightly differently.

Not all examples of 'breaking the law' are criminal. For example, breach of contract is 'breaking the law', but contract law is a different type of law to criminal law. Therefore, breach of contract is not considered criminal behaviour.

A breach of contract can be resolved in a civil court, because contract law is a type of civil law.

What is the difference between criminal law and civil law?

Civil law covers private matters between two people. Criminal law covers behaviour that is considered so serious that the government should get involved, **prosecute** the offender and punish them.

Who commits crimes?

Crimes are not just committed by individuals. They may also be committed by governments or businesses. Furthermore, crimes are not always committed in person. They may be committed over the internet or through the passing of a **discriminatory** law.

Crimes committed by governments, or by people acting on behalf of governments, are defined in International Criminal Law, instead of within the law of a particular country.

Instead of going to court in their own country, **the accused** would usually be sent to the International Criminal Court (located in the Netherlands). In certain special cases, a special court is set up to put a particular group of people on trial for crimes under International Criminal Law.

What is the difference between crime and deviance?

In criminology, criminal behaviour is often contrasted with deviant behaviour.

Criminal behaviour is any behaviour that breaks the criminal law of a country (or breaks International Criminal Law).

Deviant behaviour is any behaviour that goes against the established **norms** of society.

Norms are the 'unwritten rules', which society in general deems to be acceptable behaviour.

Prosecute

To charge somebody with a crime and put them on trial.



Discriminatory

Describes laws or practices which are unfair because they treat one group of people worse than other groups.

The accused

The person, or group of people, charged with a crime or on trial for it.

Norms

The 'unwritten' rules, which society in general decides are acceptable ways to behave.

White collar crime

What is a white collar crime?

A crime that is often committed in a **commercial** environment. White collar crimes can also be linked to organised crime groups.

Examples of white collar crime

Credit card fraud, tax evasion and breaching health and safety laws in the workplace are all examples.

Discriminating against employees on the basis of their religion, race, ethnicity, gender, ability or sexuality is also a type of white collar crime.

White collar crimes tend not to be violent. When organised groups are involved, however, white collar crimes tend to focus on prostitution and protection rackets.

Types of victim

Absolutely anybody can be targeted by a white collar crime. Individual people all the way up to whole governments, can become victims.

Individuals who are retired, those who are on parental leave, people who want to work for themselves and those who want to make a bit of extra money are often targeted by a type of white collar crime called a pyramid scheme.

Pyramid schemes work by selling products that are worthless or that don't exist at all.

In a lot of cases, the offender advertises a multi-level investment scheme which offers big profits at little or no risk to people who invest (the people who invest will become victims).

The money is not actually invested anywhere so the big profits that are promised do not actually exist. Instead, the money is passed up to those people at the top of the pyramid scheme hierarchy. This means that those who join the pyramid scheme later tend to lose out.

Types of offender

The perpetrators of white collar crime are often people who are perceived as being trustworthy. Having a high social status and being in a position of power often makes them come across as being reputable. Many offenders work in commercial environments.

Organised crime groups who partake in white collar crimes are found worldwide. The Mafia (operating in USA and Italy), Unione Corse (a French organised crime group) and the Sinaloa Cartel (based in Mexico) are all examples.

Whilst many organised crime groups are involved in white collar crimes, they are typically also involved in violent crime.

Level of public awareness

It can be very difficult to investigate white collar crimes as they tend to be very complex and are often concealed. Those committing white collar crimes are often not suspected because they tend to be trusted and perceived as reputable.

Public awareness is generally low, particularly as many victims are not aware that they are victims. This also results in white collar crimes remaining under-reported.

Criminal or deviant?

Both. White collar crimes go against criminal law. They also breach society's norms so they are considered **deviant**. They may be considered more deviant than other types of crime because they are committed by people in positions of trust.

Commercial

Involving or relating to the buying and selling of goods, and making big profits, rather than providing a service.



Deviant

Describes behaviour that goes against the established norms of society.

Moral crime

What is a moral crime?

A crime that goes against the normal standard of **morality** within society.

Examples of moral crime

Examples of moral crime include prostitution, illegal gambling and illegal drug use.

Vagrancy and underage drinking are also considered to be moral crimes.

Moral crimes often involve the transfer of a good or a service from one individual or group to another.

Types of victim

Whilst many moral crimes can be considered 'victimless', it can be argued that the offender and victim are the same person.

For example, prostitution, vagrancy and illegal drug use can involve the victim and offender being the same person.

However, in case of underage drug use, drinking and smoking, there is a clear victim involved. In these cases, the person supplying the substance is considered an offender too.

Types of offender

This is dependent on the type of crime. As discussed above, the victim is often the same person as the offender.

Difficult financial or person situations often lead to offenders becoming involved in moral crimes.

For example, a person found guilty of vagrancy may have ended up in that position because of a fall-out with family, separating with a partner or addiction (social factors) or because of financial factors, which ultimately result in homelessness.

Equally, an individual may feel forced to engage in sex work if they are experiencing financial difficulties.

Level of public awareness

Public awareness is often low because moral crimes tend to be hidden from friends and family of the victim and offender.

Sympathy for offenders, particularly in the case of sex workers and vagrants, often results in the public ignoring the crime or trying to personally help the offender, rather than reporting the crime to the police.

Criminal or deviant?

Both. By definition, moral crimes are deviant as they go against the generally accepted **norms** within society.

They are also considered criminal and punishable by law. However, some may argue that **penalising** rough sleepers and sex workers is unhelpful and can leave them much worse off and in a more dangerous predicament.

Morality

A system of principles and values concerning people's behaviour, which is generally accepted by society or by a particular group of people.



Vagrancy

Being homeless and wandering from place to place; not being settled in one place.

Norms

The 'unwritten' rules, which society in general decides are acceptable ways to behave.

Penalising

Punishing or giving a penalty.

State crime

What is a state crime?

An illegal activity carried out on behalf of a government agency.

Examples of state crime

War crimes, police brutality and **genocide** are examples of state crime.

The former Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir was indicted by the International Criminal Court for directing a campaign of mass killing and rape against Darfuri citizens.

It is estimated that approximately 400,000 Darfuri citizens lost their lives as a result of al-Bashir's **ethnic cleansing** campaign.

State crimes such as genocide and war crimes are covered by International Criminal Law, and many of these crimes breach human rights **treaties**.

Types of victim

Victims tend to be those who can be controlled by the government that is committing the crime.

Belonging to a particular race, religion, nationality or ethnicity can result in victimisation. Jews (along with other groups) from Germany and Nazi-occupied Europe were victims of the Holocaust.

Types of offender

Government officials, especially those in senior positions, tend to be involved in state crimes. They may be directly involved or they may organise illegal campaigns.

Government officials in lower positions may also be involved, particularly in physically carrying out illegal activities.

Level of public awareness

Public awareness tends to be fairly high, especially because of the speed and influence of media reporting on such issues.

For example, there is high public awareness of the atrocities allegedly being carried out against Uighur Muslims in China.

Some states use their power to **suppress** the media and to cover up their crimes.

Criminal or deviant?

State crimes are deviant. They tend to go way past the boundaries of acceptable behaviour within society.

Whether they are considered criminal is dependent on the state. Governments are able to create laws to justify particular acts as being 'legal'.

However, as mentioned earlier, the International Criminal Court can pass judgement on states accused of committing war crimes, genocide and human rights abuses.

Genocide

An example of a state crime which involves mass killing, rape and torture of an entire group on the basis of their nationality, religion, race or ethnicity.



Ethnic cleansing

The mass expulsion or killing of members of one ethnic or religious group in an area by those of another group.

Treaties

Formal written agreements between countries in which they agree to do particularly things or to help each other.

Suppress

To prevent something from continuing or developing.

Technological crime

What is a technological crime?

Also known as cybercrime, a technological crime involves the use of the internet or other technologies to commit an offence.

Technological crimes often go hand-in-hand with other crime types, such as white collar crime.

Examples of technological crime

Internet-enabled fraud (linked with white collar crime), illegally downloading songs, movies and books, downloading illegal images (linked to moral crime) and using social media to carry out hate crimes are all examples of technological crime.

Types of victim

This depends on the type of crime being committed and the type of technology being used.

Individuals of many different ages use online banking and mobile banking, and they may become victims of internet-enabled **fraud**.

Small businesses are likely to be affected by technological crimes. The FSB found that, in 2019, over a million small businesses were vulnerable to **phishing**, malware and payment scams.

Businesses in the North West, South East and West Midlands were most likely to suffer from cyber threats.

They concluded that small businesses tend to be vulnerable because they have often not invested in security software, do not regularly update their security software and/or do not have a strict password policy for work-related devices.

Types of offender

Offenders can be anybody who has access to the internet. In 2019, the Intellectual Property Office estimated that 17% of e-books are consumed illegally in the UK.

Technological crimes can **transcend** international borders.

In the case of defrauding credit card details and accessing bank accounts, offenders tend to be based overseas.

Some technological crimes, like **hacking** and fraud, require offenders to have particular skills and knowledge.

Level of public awareness

This varies depending on the crime.

Those who have unknowingly provided sensitive bank details through a phishing scam may not realise they are a victim until a fraudulent bank transaction has been carried out.

Criminal or deviant?

Both, in the case of most, but not all, technological crimes.

Race hate crimes over social media and viewing child pornography are illegal and very clearly sit outside accepted norms.

Downloading movies illegally is criminal but may not be considered deviant as so many people engage with this behaviour.

Fraud

The crime of gaining money or financial benefits by deceiving others.



Phishing

The practise of trying to trick people into giving sensitive financial information by sending emails that look as if they come from a bank. The details are then used to steal people's money, or to steal their identity in order to commit crimes.

Transcend

To go beyond the boundaries of something.

Hacking

To gain unauthorised access to data in a system or a computer, often to view sensitive information or to threaten an individual/organisation with a ransom.

Individual crimes: Hate crime

What is a hate crime?

A criminal act which involves an offender targeting a victim on the basis of their membership (or perceived membership) of a particular group.

Whilst hate crime is not a category of criminal offence, it is an **aggravating factor** in other offences. If hate is found to be the **motivation** behind a crime, this can result in higher punishments for offenders.

Examples of hate crime

Physical violence, verbal abuse, harassment, blackmail and incitement to hatred are all examples of crimes that can be motivated by hate.

Types of victim

Victims may be of a particular race, religion, sexual orientation, gender or have a disability.

Whilst anybody can be a victim of hate crime, those belonging to a minority group within society are more likely to be victimised.

For example, when hate crimes are carried out on the basis of sexual orientation, the victim is likely to be an LGB person rather than a heterosexual person.

Types of offender

Offenders are typically those who are racist or prejudiced against a particular group within society.

Level of public awareness

The media has been influential in increasing public awareness of hate crime.

The Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001 was amended to ensure that religiously-aggravated offences carried tougher penalties.

For example, assault is punishable with a maximum of six months' imprisonment, but this rises to two years if the assault is aggravated by religious motivation.

Many people have called for social media outlets to crackdown on **anti-Semitic** hate speech online after a string of tweets was posted by grime artist, Wiley, in 2020. The tweets were widely reported by the media.

Whilst public awareness is rising, reporting of hate crimes is still low. In 2017, Stonewall found that 80% of LGBT people who experienced a hate crime or incident didn't report it to the police.

Criminal or deviant?

Both. Society generally deems it unacceptable to discriminate against a person on the grounds of their race, gender identity, disability, sexual orientation or religious belief.

Aggravating factor

Any fact or circumstance which increases how severe a criminal act is or the level of responsibility the offender should take for their crime.



Motivation

The reason for acting or behaving in a particular way.

Anti-Semitic

Describes someone or something that is hostile to or prejudiced against Jewish people.

Individual crimes: Honour crime

What is an honour crime?

A punishment given to an individual because they are deemed to have brought shame on their family or community.

Like with hate crimes, honour crime is not a category of offence, but a motivation for committing an offence.

Examples of honour crime

Examples include acid attacks, false imprisonment, abduction, assault, disfigurement, rape and murder.

Types of victim

Whilst anybody can be a victim of an honour crime, in the vast majority of cases the victim is a girl or young woman.

The victim tends to be part of a family which has a moral or **ethical** code that conflicts with the young person's behaviour.

Most victims of honour crime in the UK have tended to be from Middle Eastern and Asian families.

Types of offender

Offenders are typically members of the victim's family.

In most cases, the offender is a male member of the family, usually the father, brother or uncle of the victim.

However, in some cases, other family members and female family members have been involved.

In 2007, Bachan Athwal and Sukhdave Athwal were jailed for orchestrating the murder of their daughter-in-law after she expressed her desire to end her marriage to their son.

Offenders are usually motivated by the perceived shame brought on the family as a result of the young person's actions.

Often, offenders feel they will be judged by other members of their community and they commit honour crimes to retain their status within the community.

Level of public awareness

Cultural differences have resulted in low levels of public awareness of honour crimes.

Within communities where honour crime occurs, it is often viewed as an appropriate response to 'shameful' behaviour. Therefore, it is often not reported so the community remains unaware.

Criminal or deviant?

Honour crimes are criminal, especially as they often take some form of abuse and/or extreme violence.

They are also considered deviant in wider society.

However, particular communities may not regard honour crime as deviant because they are justified as culturally appropriate within some communities.

Ethical

Relating to beliefs about right and wrong.



Individual crimes:

Domestic abuse

What is domestic abuse?

Any abusive act against a family member or romantic partner.

Acts of domestic abuse usually take place in the home and in secret.

Domestic abuse covers physical, sexual, emotional and financial abuse.

Examples of domestic abuse

Assault, murder, rape and controlling or **coercive** behaviour are examples of domestic abuse.

Types of victim

The majority of victims are women, although men can also be victims of domestic abuse.

The most recent statistics suggest that women account for 62.7% of recorded cases of domestic abuse, though we will learn later that there are issues with unrecorded crime in this area.

Women are also more likely to be the victim of more serious domestic violence, with 70% of the victims of domestic **homicide** being women.

However, men and children can also be victims. Domestic violence also happens within the LGBT community.

The most vulnerable women are those who are young, separated from a partner, a single parent, disabled and/or have a low income.

Types of offender

Typically, but not always, offenders are men who have or previously had romantic relations with the female victim.

Level of public awareness

Offenders usually keep their crimes hidden.

They do not make their crimes public knowledge and they tend to have a great level of control over their victim(s) so their victims often don't speak out as they are fearful.

Public awareness is, therefore, quite low.

Male victims of domestic violence tend to be particularly reluctant to file a report with the police so public awareness of domestic violence against men tends to be very low.

Criminal or deviant?

Both!

Coercive

Describes behaviour that is threatening and forceful.



Homicide

The killing of one person by another.