

## Why Do People Commit Crime?

The study of why people commit crime is important, not only as a field of behavioural research, but as a source of data for constructing public policy models in response to criminal behaviour. Greater understanding of why people commit criminal offences enables policy makers and the general public to make better decisions about the criminal justice system.

Theory of Crime	Characteristics or Beliefs of Theory	Solutions to Crime	Accept/Reject Theory and Reasons for Decision
<b>Classical Theory</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crime is caused by the individual free will.</li> <li>• Human beings are rational, and make decisions freely and with understanding of consequences.</li> <li>• Crime is an immoral form of behaviour.</li> <li>• Immoral behaviour will weaken the society.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Punishment is a necessary evil sometimes needed to deter criminals and to serve as an example for those who would violate the law.</li> <li>• Crime prevention is possible through swift and certain punishment that counters any possible gains from criminal behaviour.</li> <li>• More prisons and stiffer criminal laws with greater penalties for offenders are the best solutions to crime.</li> </ul>	
<b>Biological Theory</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The basic determinants of human behaviour are, to a considerable degree, determined by genetics.</li> <li>• These basic determinants of human behaviour may be passed from one generation to the next; criminal behaviour is genetically inherited.</li> <li>• Human DNA, environmental contaminants, nutrition, hormones, physical trauma (especially to the brain) and body chemistry all combine to contribute to criminal behaviour.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Eugenics movement appeared, including state - mandated sterilization of "feeble minded persons" in British Columbia and Alberta in the 1950s.</li> <li>• Prevention of additional offspring would end the genetically criminal cycle.</li> <li>• Research to find the gene responsible for crime will allow medical science to turn off the gene in question once located.</li> </ul>	

<p><b>Psychobiological Theory (continued)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chromosomal anomalies, reactions to foods, vitamin deficiencies, or environmental allergies, combined with a particular genetic makeup, will predispose some individuals to criminal behaviour.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Since no such gene has been discovered, medicinal approaches are employed using tranquilizers, antipsychotic drugs, and other mood-altering drugs to control behaviour.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Sociological Theory</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The social environment is the cause of criminal behaviour, with weak or broken bonds to family, school, and religion being the catalyst to criminal behaviour.</li> <li>• People engage in criminal behaviour because they do not see the benefits of adhering to conventional social values, and believe crime is a way to improve personal social conditions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive alternatives divert peoples' actions away from criminal activity and create a sense of belonging, competence, and empowerment.</li> <li>• Social programmes that change the cultural and social conditions thought to lead people into crime are the best solution.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Interactionist Theory</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Association with other criminals is the factor most contributing to criminal behaviour among individuals.</li> <li>• Failure of self-direction, and inadequate social roles are the root causes of criminal behaviour.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offenders have the responsibility and ability to change their own behaviours.</li> <li>• Opportunities for positive interaction with society will enable the criminal, or would be criminal, to choose productive and lawful behaviours to meet needs.</li> </ul>	

Consider each of the above theories regarding causes of crime, and the hypothetical solutions each theory offers. In the right hand column, identify whether you accept or reject the theory, and indicate why you have made the decisions as you have. Be prepared to share your information first with a partner, and then with members of a group of six.