

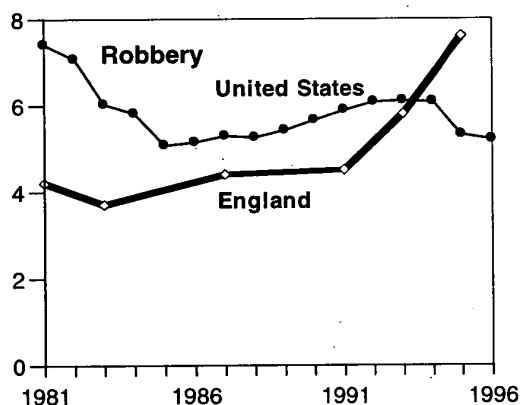


## Bureau of Justice Statistics Executive Summary

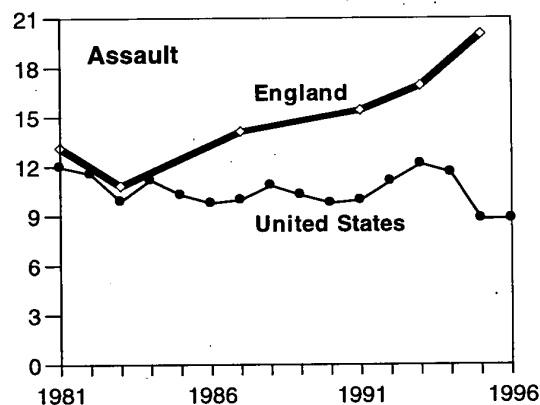
# Crime and Justice in the United States and in England and Wales, 1981-96

In 1995 victim surveys, crime rates for robbery, assault, burglary, and motor vehicle theft are higher in England (including Wales) than in the United States.

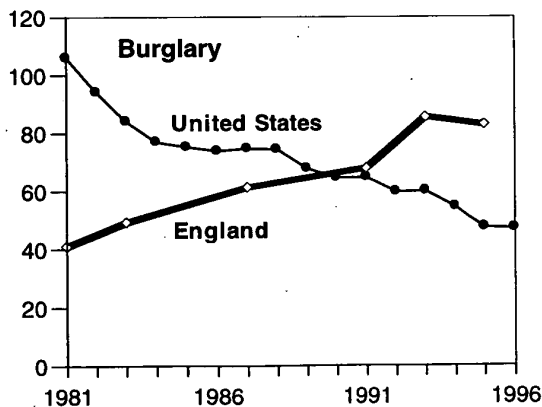
Survey crime rate per 1,000 population



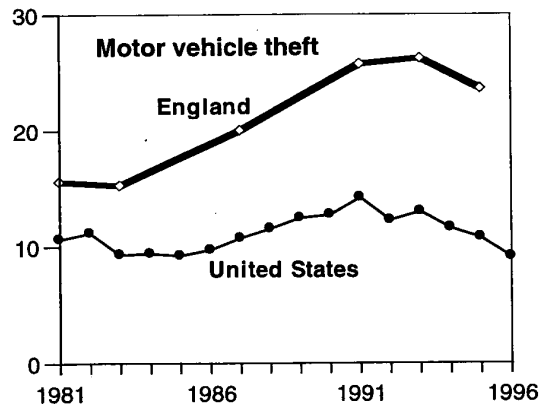
Survey crime rate per 1,000 population



Survey crime rate per 1,000 households



Survey crime rate per 1,000 households



# Crime and Justice in the United States and in England and Wales, 1981-96

By Patrick A. Langan, Ph.D. and David P. Farrington, Ph.D.

BJS Statistician

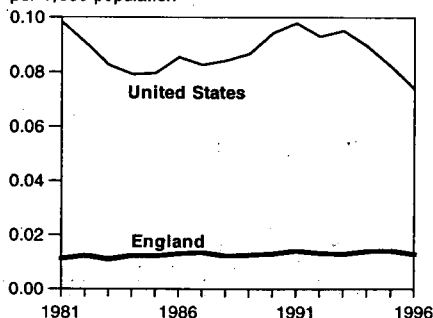
BJS Visiting Fellow, University of Cambridge

## Highlights

- Whether measured by surveys of crime victims or by police statistics, serious crime rates are not generally higher in the United States than England. (All references to England include Wales.) According to 1995 victim surveys — which measure robbery, assault, burglary, and motor vehicle theft — crime rates are all higher in England than the United States (figures 1-4 of the report beginning on page 1). According to latest (1996) police statistics — which measure incidents reported to police of murder, rape, robbery, assault, burglary, and motor vehicle theft — crime rates are higher in England for three crimes: assault, burglary, and motor vehicle theft (figures 5-10). The 1996 crime rate for a fourth crime (robbery) would have been higher in England than the United States had English police recorded the same fraction of robberies that came to their attention as American police (figure 15).

- The major exception to the pattern of higher crime rates in England is the murder rate. The 1996 U.S. murder rate is vastly higher (nearly six times) than England's, although the difference between the two countries has narrowed over the past 16 years (below, and figure 5 of the report).

Murder: Police-recorded crime rate per 1,000 population



- Firearms are more often involved in violent crimes in the United States than in England. According to 1996 police statistics, firearms were used in 68% of U.S. murders but 7% of English murders, and 41% of U.S. robberies but 5% of English robberies.

- Since 1981, an offender's risk of being caught, convicted, and sentenced to incarceration has risen in the United States for all six measured crimes (murder, rape, robbery, assault, burglary, motor vehicle theft) but has fallen in England for all but murder (figures 43-48).

- U.S. crime rates — whether measured by surveys of crime victims or by police statistics — generally fell in the early 1980's, rose thereafter until around 1993, and then fell again (figures 1-10). For most U.S. crimes (survey estimated assault, burglary, and motor vehicle theft; police-recorded murder, robbery, and burglary), the latest crime rates (1996) are the lowest recorded in the 16-year period from 1981 to 1996. By comparison, English crime rates as measured in both victim surveys and police statistics have all risen since 1981. For half of the measured English crime categories, the latest crime rates (1995 for rates from victim surveys; 1996 for rates from police statistics) are the highest recorded since 1981 (figures 1-10).

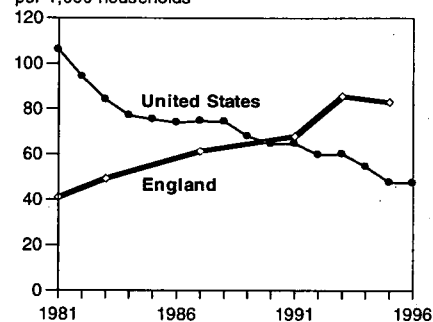
As a result of different crime trends in the two countries —

- the U.S. robbery rate as measured in the victim survey was nearly double England's in 1981, but in 1995 the English robbery rate was 1.4 times America's (figure 1)

- the English assault rate as measured in the victim survey was slightly higher than America's in 1981, but in 1995 the English assault rate was more than double America's (figure 2)

- the U.S. burglary rate as measured in the victim survey was more than double England's in 1981, but in 1995 the English burglary rate was nearly double America's (below, and figure 3 of the report)

Burglary: Survey crime rate per 1,000 households



- the English motor vehicle theft rate as measured in the victim survey was 1.5 times America's in 1981, but in 1995 the English rate for vehicle theft was more than double America's (figure 4)

- the U.S. murder rate as measured in police statistics was 8.7 times England's in 1981 but 5.7 times in 1996 (figure 5)

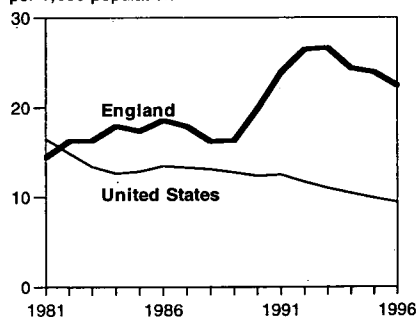
- the U.S. rape rate as measured in police statistics was 17 times England's in 1981 but 3 times in 1996 (figure 6)

- the U.S. robbery rate as measured in police statistics was 6 times England's in 1981 but 1.4 times in 1996 (figure 7)

- the U.S. assault rate as measured in police statistics was 1.5 times England's in 1981, but in 1996 the English assault rate was slightly higher than America's (figure 8)

- the U.S. burglary rate as measured in police statistics was slightly higher than England's in 1981, but in 1996 the English burglary rate was more than double America's (below, and figure 9 of the report)

Burglary: Police-recorded crime rate per 1,000 population



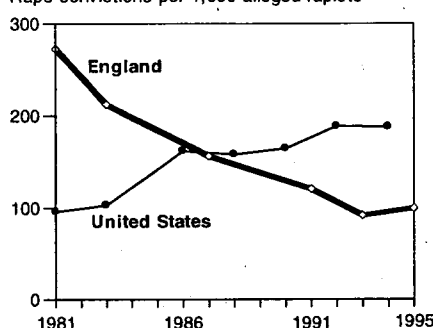
- the English motor vehicle theft rate as measured in police statistics went from 1.4 times America's in 1981 to nearly 2 times in 1996 (figure 10).

According to statistics on the criminal justice systems in the two countries (1994 in the United States; 1995 in England) —

- a person committing a serious crime in the United States (rape, robbery, assault, burglary, and motor vehicle theft, but not murder) is generally more likely than one in England to be caught

and convicted (below, and figures 25-30 of the report)

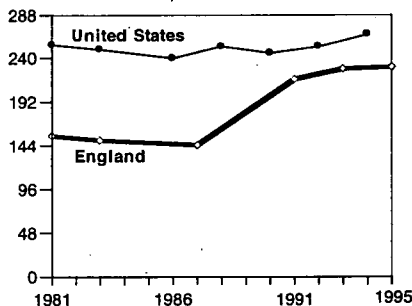
Rape convictions per 1,000 alleged rapists



- courts in the United States are generally more likely to sentence a convicted offender to incarceration (for robbery, assault, burglary, and motor vehicle theft, but not murder or rape) than courts in England (figures 31-36)

- for all offenses (murder, rape, robbery, assault, burglary, motor vehicle theft), courts in the United States sentence convicted offenders to longer periods of incarceration than courts in England (below, and figures 49-54 of the report)

Average incarceration sentence imposed on convicted murderers, in months



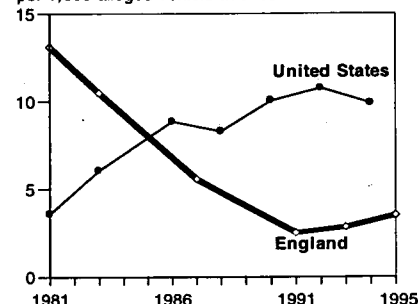
- for all offenses (murder, rape, robbery, assault, burglary, motor vehicle theft), the length of time in confinement before being released is longer for incarcerated offenders in the United States than in England (figures 55-60)

- the fraction of the sentence served before release is generally about the same in the United States and England (figures 61-66).

Since 1981 —

- an offender's risk of being caught, convicted, and incarcerated has been rising in the United States but falling in England (below, and figures 43-48 of the report)

Number of incarcerated motor vehicle thieves per 1,000 alleged vehicle thieves



- sentences for serious crime generally have not been getting longer in the United States, while in England sentences generally have been getting longer for violent crimes (figures 49-54)

- in general, the length of time in confinement before release has not been rising in the United States but it has been rising for violent crimes in England (murder, rape, and robbery) (figures 55-60)

- the fraction of the sentence served before release has not been showing any clear general trend in the United States, while in England the sentence fraction served has been staying fairly stable for murder, rape and robbery, but has been dropping for assault, burglary, and motor vehicle theft (figures 61-66)

- the risk of criminal punishment has been rising in the United States and falling in England (figures 67-72).

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