

Comparisons of Crime in OECD Countries

The UN affiliated European Institute for Crime Prevention and Control has recently published the most up-to-date [international comparison of crime statistics](#). The figures are based on the [UN Survey of Crime Trends \(UN-CTS\)](#). In the past the UN only published comparisons for Europe and North America, but the latest report uses police-recorded crime for 2006 for many additional countries. However, because there are significant problems of comparability, Civitas has selected only those nations that belong to the OECD. Its members are more likely to have reliable national statistics agencies and to be accustomed to standardising information. It is frustrating that international comparisons are so far behind, but ironing out inconsistencies to ensure that we really are comparing like with like simply takes a long time.

We know from comparisons with other EU members that crime in England and Wales is very high. In 2004 the European Union's Crime and Safety Survey looked at 18 countries and found that the UK was a 'crime hotspot', along with Ireland, the Netherlands and Denmark. And in 2007 the Eurostat figures for the 27 EU members found that England and Wales had the third worst crime rate.

How does our crime rate compare?

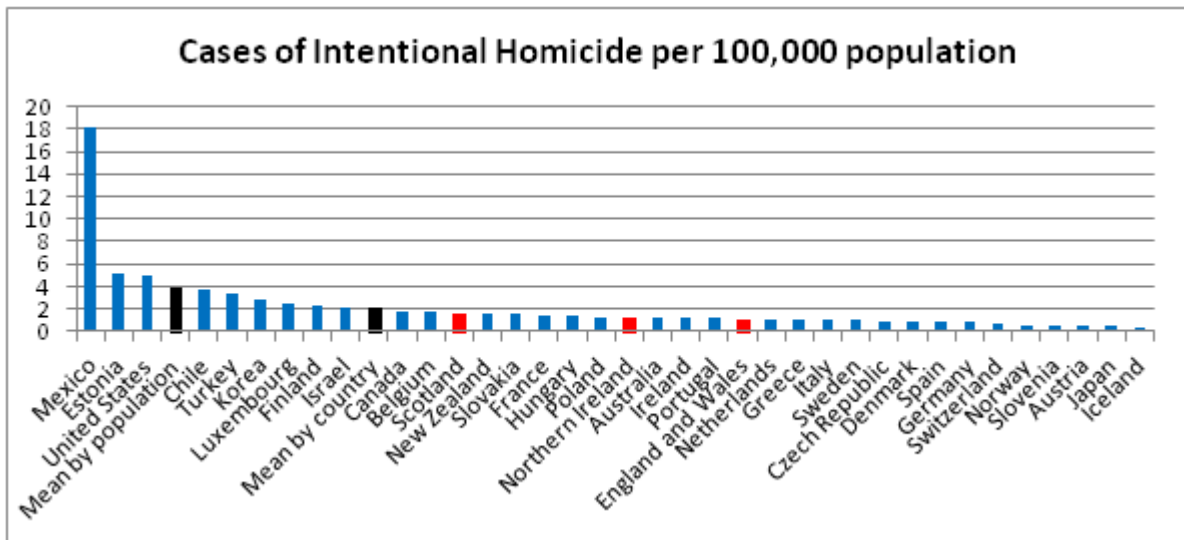
But how do England and Wales compare with developed countries inside and outside Europe? The UN comparisons are based on six of the most serious crimes: intentional homicide, rape, robbery, assault causing serious bodily harm, burglary and vehicle theft.

Ranks out of 36 countries unless stated.	England	Scotland	Northern Ireland
Homicide	22 nd	12 th	18 th
Rape	5 th out of 34	11 th	8 th
Robbery	7 th	23 rd	13 th
Assault (resulting in serious injury)	3 rd	1 st	28 th
Burglary	7 th	22 nd	12 th
Vehicle theft	14 th out of 35	18 th	20 th

Compared with our peers, the report shows that we are a high-crime society with a particular propensity to violence short of intentional homicide.

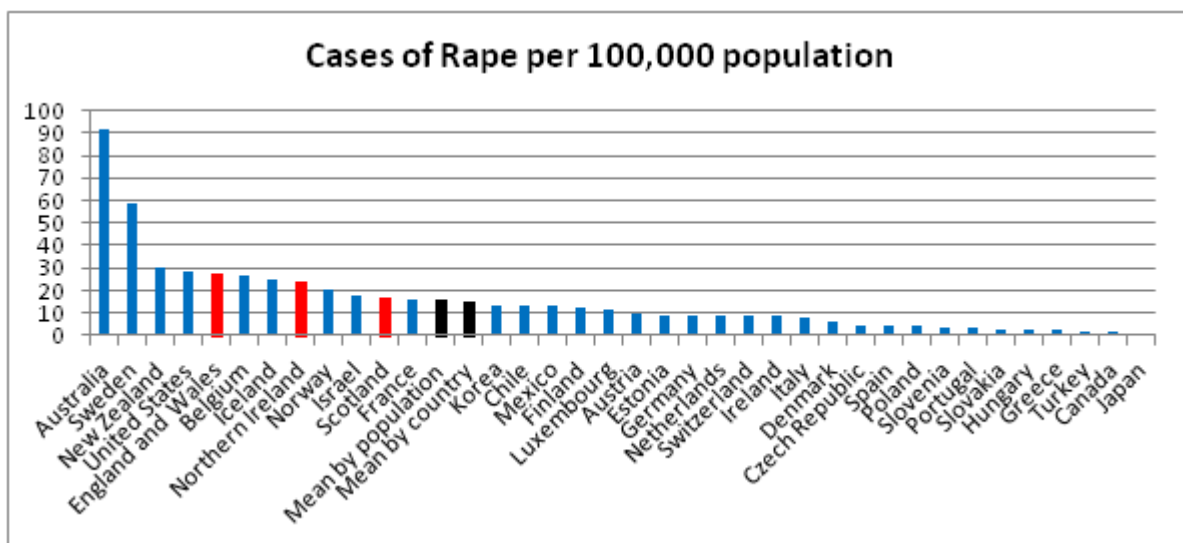
Intentional Homicide

Country	Police Recorded Cases per 100,000 population
Mexico	18.1
Estonia	5.2
United States	5.0
Chile	3.7
Turkey	3.3
Korea	2.9
Luxembourg	2.5
Finland	2.3
Israel	2.1
Canada	1.8
Belgium	1.7
Scotland	1.6
New Zealand	1.5
Slovakia	1.5
France	1.4
Hungary	1.4
Poland	1.3
Northern Ireland	1.2
Australia	1.2
Ireland	1.2
Portugal	1.2
England and Wales	1.1
Netherlands	1.1
Greece	1.0
Italy	1.0
Sweden	1.0
Czech Republic	0.9
Denmark	0.9
Spain	0.9
Germany	0.8
Switzerland	0.7
Norway	0.6
Slovenia	0.6
Austria	0.5
Japan	0.5
Iceland	0.3



Sources: UK Police recorded crimes for 2009/10,
 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Homicide Statistics,
<http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/homicide.html>

Rape



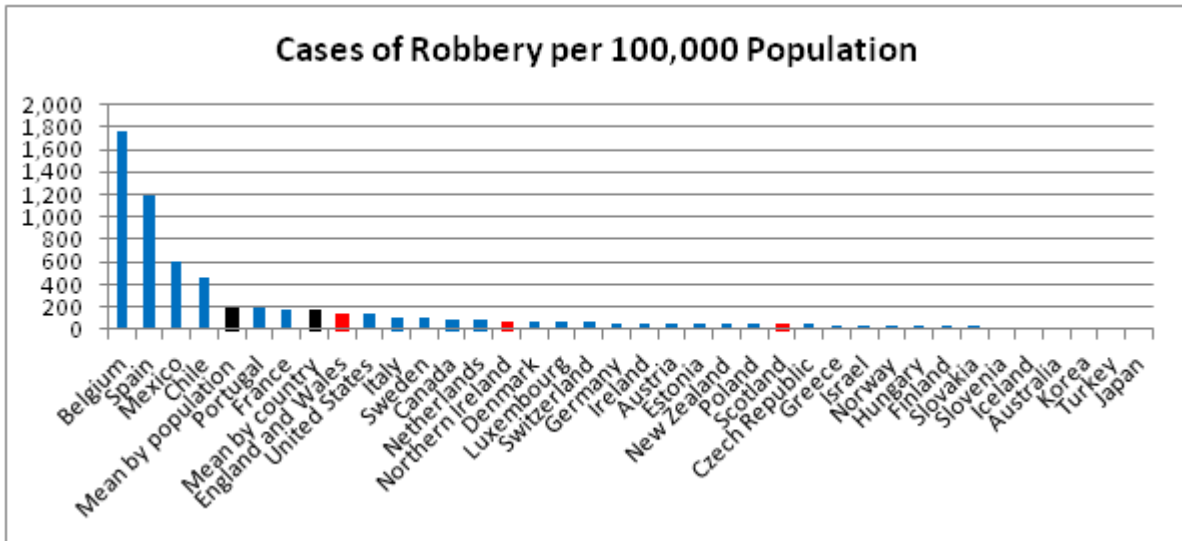
Country	Police Recorded Rape Cases per 100,000 Population
Australia	91.9
Sweden	58.6
New Zealand	30.6
United States	28.6
England and Wales	27.7
Belgium	26.6
Iceland	24.7
Northern Ireland	23.6
Norway	20.6
Israel	17.5
Scotland	17.0
France	16.2
Korea	13.5
Chile	13.3
Mexico	13.3
Finland	12.4
Luxembourg	11.7
Austria	9.3
Estonia	9.2
Germany	8.9
Netherlands	8.8
Switzerland	8.7
Ireland	8.5
Italy	7.6
Denmark	6.4
Czech Republic	4.6
Spain	4.5
Poland	4.0
Slovenia	3.9
Portugal	3.5
Slovakia	2.6
Hungary	2.3
Greece	2.2
Turkey	1.5
Canada	1.4
Japan	1.1

Sources: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Statistics on Crime, Sexual Violence

http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/statistics/crime/CTS12_Sexual_violence.xls

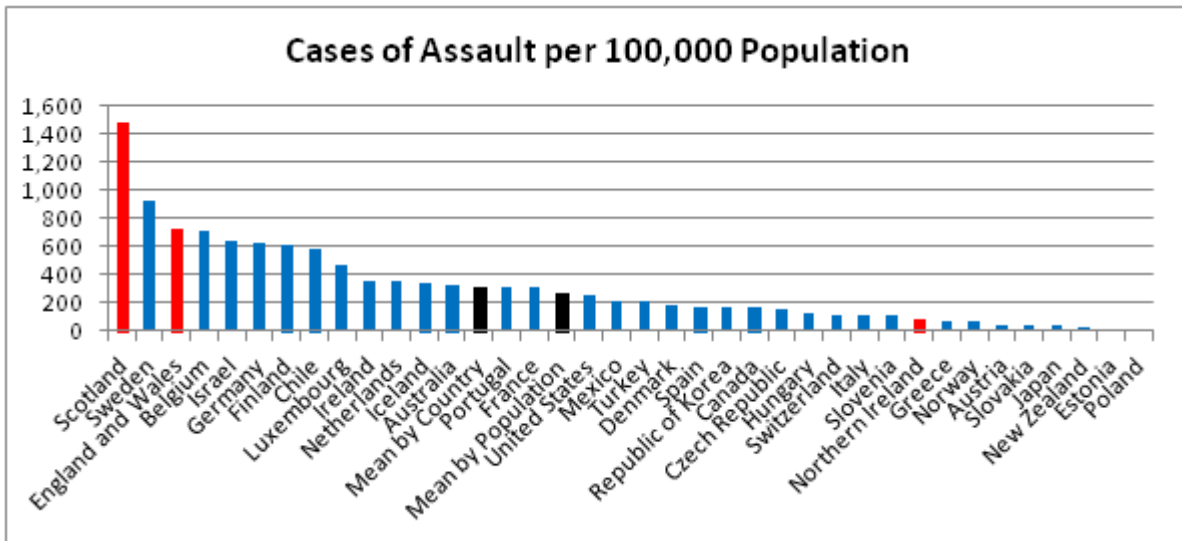
Robbery

Country	Cases of Robbery per 100,000 Population
Belgium	1762
Spain	1188
Mexico	607
Chile	456
Portugal	192
France	181
England and Wales	137
United States	133
Italy	108
Sweden	103
Canada	96
Netherlands	84
Northern Ireland	74
Denmark	73
Luxembourg	67
Switzerland	66
Germany	60
Ireland	56
Austria	55
Estonia	54
New Zealand	52
Poland	50
Scotland	48
Czech Republic	45
Greece	42
Israel	40
Norway	37
Hungary	32
Finland	31
Slovakia	25
Slovenia	24
Iceland	19
Australia	18
Korea	13
Turkey	11
Japan	4



Source: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Statistics on Crime, Robbery
http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/statistics/crime/CTS12_Robbery.xls

Assault



Country	Police Recorded Assault Cases per 100,000 Population
Scotland	1487
Sweden	927
England and Wales	730
Belgium	718
Israel	641
Germany	630
Finland	615
Chile	576
Luxembourg	476
Ireland	353
Netherlands	352
Iceland	346
Australia	327
Portugal	312
France	310
United States	262
Mexico	218
Turkey	218
Denmark	191
Spain	177
Korea	172
Canada	170
Czech Republic	162
Hungary	124
Switzerland	117
Italy	110
Slovenia	108
Northern Ireland	90
Greece	69
Norway	64
Austria	48
Slovakia	48
Japan	44
New Zealand	23
Estonia	8
Poland	2

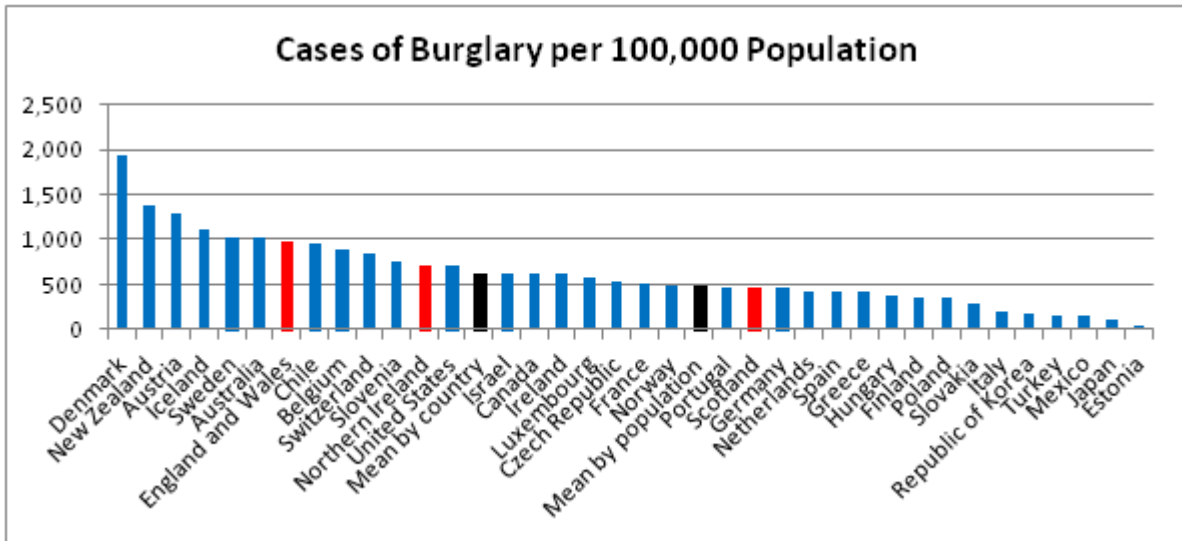
The UNODC definition of assault requires that the offence resulted in serious bodily injury.

Source: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Statistics on Crime, Assault

http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/statistics/crime/CTS12_Assault.xls

Burglary

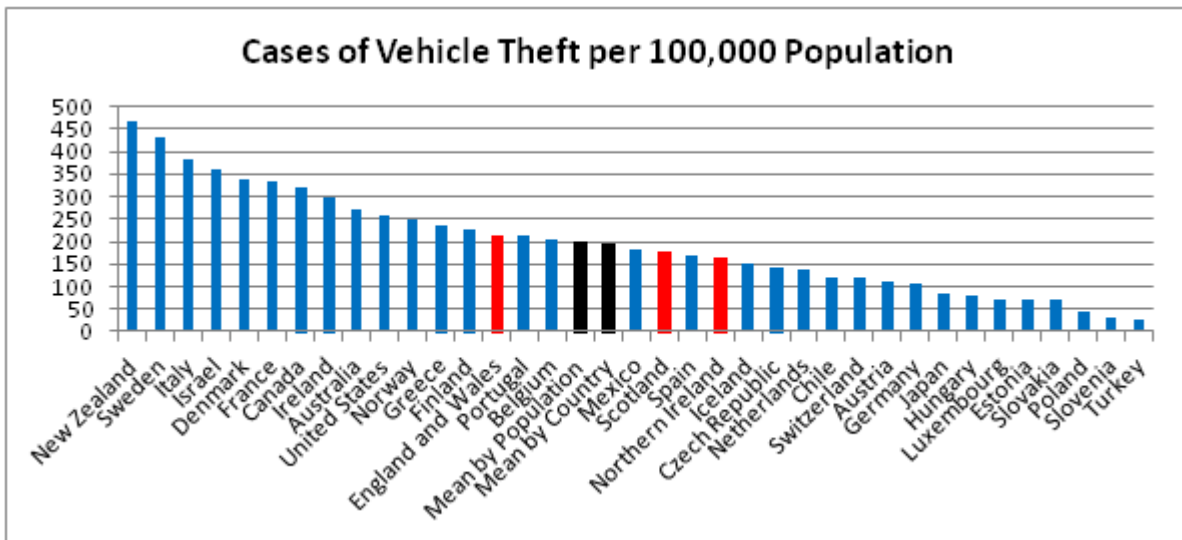
Country	Police Recorded Cases per 100,000 population
Denmark	1939
New Zealand	1386
Austria	1283
Iceland	1117
Sweden	1029
Australia	1017
England and Wales	986
Chile	965
Belgium	891
Switzerland	843
Slovenia	746
Northern Ireland	717
United States	715
Israel	611
Canada	611
Ireland	610
Luxembourg	573
Czech Republic	525
France	513
Norway	490
Portugal	463
Scotland	458
Germany	456
Netherlands	428
Spain	420
Greece	416
Hungary	377
Finland	359
Poland	354
Slovakia	282
Italy	190
Korea	169
Turkey	161
Mexico	156
Japan	117
Estonia	40



Source: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Statistics on Crime, Burglary

http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/statistics/crime/CTS12_Burglary.xls

Vehicle Theft



Country	Police Recorded Vehicle Theft Cases per 100,000 population
New Zealand	466
Sweden	433
Italy	384
Israel	362
Denmark	338
France	333
Canada	321
Ireland	298
Australia	272
United States	258
Norway	249
Greece	236
Finland	228
England and Wales	215
Portugal	211
Belgium	205
Mexico	181
Scotland	179
Spain	171
Northern Ireland	164
Iceland	151
Czech Republic	141
Netherlands	138
Chile	121
Switzerland	121
Austria	111
Germany	106
Japan	85
Hungary	80
Luxembourg	71
Estonia	70
Slovakia	69
Poland	45
Slovenia	29
Turkey	25

Source: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Statistics on Crime, Motor Vehicle Theft

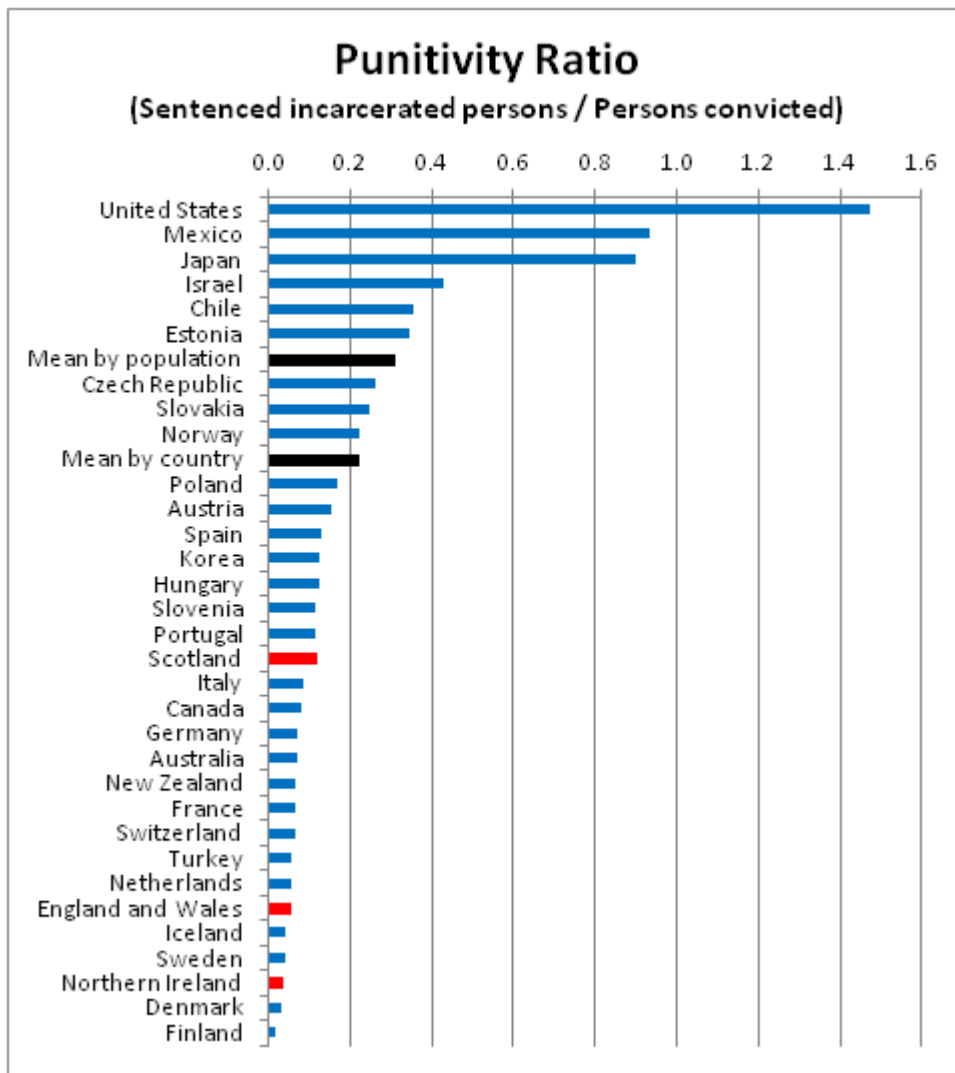
http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/statistics/crime/CTS12_Motor_vehicle_theft.xls

Are we a punitive society?

The report also allows us to test the theory that our system is especially punitive, a claim recently made by the Justice Secretary, Kenneth Clarke. The report calculates a 'punitivity ratio' by contrasting the number of people convicted in a year with the number of prisoners in jail as a result of a court sentence. (That is, the figure includes only prisoners sentenced to jail, not those on remand; and it includes prisoners sentenced in earlier years to long terms of imprisonment.)

If a nation handed down prison sentences to a high proportion of those found guilty, or gave long sentences to those given custody, then it would have a high 'punitivity ratio'.

However, the score for England and Wales, contrary to the claims of Kenneth Clarke, is low. The claim that our criminal-justice policies are punitive is not, therefore, supported by the best available evidence.



Country	Punitivity Ratio
United States	1.471
Mexico	0.934
Japan	0.898
Israel	0.429
Chile	0.356
Estonia	0.345
Czech Republic	0.263
Slovakia	0.249
Norway	0.222
Poland	0.168
Austria	0.152
Spain	0.130
Korea	0.123
Hungary	0.123
Slovenia	0.117
Portugal	0.115
Scotland	0.115
Italy	0.085
Canada	0.078
Germany	0.069
Australia	0.068
New Zealand	0.065
France	0.065
Switzerland	0.064
Turkey	0.054
Netherlands	0.054
England and Wales	0.049
Iceland	0.041
Sweden	0.040
Northern Ireland	0.032
Denmark	0.032
Finland	0.015

Sources Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Statistics on Crime, [Persons Convicted](#), [Persons Detained](#) Following p143. Table 6. Harrendorf S, Heiskanen M, Malby S, International Statistics on Crime and Justice, European Institute for Crime Prevention and Control, affiliated with the United Nations, Helsinki 2010.