

Explanations for Patterns of Crime: Age

<p>Opportunities for criminal behaviour</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * More young people (aged 14 – 25 – the peak ages for criminal activity) live in urban areas which provides more opportunities for crime: more shops, offices, businesses, cars, houses etc. * Fewer opportunities for serious work-related crimes because young are rarely in positions of authority. * More opportunities for work-related crime for older people. * Middle and upper class youth have fewer opportunities for crime because they are more-likely to be in full-time education up to age of 21 / 22 than working class youth. * Working class youth more-likely to be in low-paid, low skill work (or unemployed). Criminal behaviour may be used as a source of excitement as well as money. * Women will have fewer opportunities to commit crimes if they have a home / children to look after.
<p>Opportunity Structures</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * After age 25 we see a steep drop in criminal activity as people take-on new roles such as wage-earner, parent, spouse etc. The possibility of jail time becomes a relatively more-serious matter because of the impact it will have on the perpetrators life and responsibilities. * Given that the vast majority of crime is relatively petty, older people may cease to follow a lifestyle (clubbing...) that gives them opportunities for these crimes. * As people get older they take-on more personal responsibilities (work / career for example) and social responsibilities (children or a partner for example) which makes them consider the effect their behaviour might have on people they love / value. * Lack of responsibilities might also lead to the opposite happening – more crime being committed because the perpetrator doesn't have to consider others. * Young people are rarely in a position to commit major work-related crimes (such as computer fraud) because their work roles are usually fairly low-level and do not involve having authority over others. They are more likely to be managed at work rather than being a manager. * The lifestyles of the middle-aged and the elderly may be more-focused on the home (watching TV...) than outside the home.

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Primary /
Secondary
Socialisation

- * Conformity to peer group behaviour and pressure may promote deviance. This is particularly likely among young people, where peer pressure may encourage them to adopt forms of deviant behaviour (such as truancy or underage drinking).
- * The socialisation experiences of middle and upper class youth may lay more stress on conformity to social rules (formal norms).
- * Middle and upper class youth may have less need to support a particular lifestyle through crime because they may have alternative sources of income (parents, for example).
- * For some young people, crime / deviance may be a source of social status within a peer or family group. The ability to commit skilful crimes or be the “hardest” person in a group, for example, may confer status that is denied young people in society.
- * Working class socialisation may suggest some forms of crime are “not really crimes” (receiving stolen goods, for example).

Social
Control
Agencies

- * Risk-taking and “thumbing their nose” at authority may be characteristics of the young which are more-likely to lead them into crime.
- * If opportunities for deviance are denied, then crime cannot occur. For example, young women are given less freedom by their families than young men which means they will have fewer opportunities to commit crimes.
- * Young women may commit fewer crimes than young men because they are less-likely to have full-time paid work and more-likely to have full-time unpaid work within the home.

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Police:
Strategies
Labelling
(Stereotypes
and
Scapegoats)

* Just like everyone else, the police have an ideological conception of both crime and criminals (that is, they have a ideas about who is most likely to commit certain types of crime). They use this mental map as a guide for their work. The more the idea of an association between young males and crime becomes established, the more the process of criminalisation begins to resemble a self-fulfilling prophecy – young males need to be policed because of their heavy involvement (and arrest / conviction) in crime. The more young people are closely policed, the more any involvement in crime is picked-up.

* Young people have less status in our society which may lead the police to police their behaviour more closely / heavily.

Judicial
behaviour
Labelling
Stereotypes
Medical
models

* Young people (especially working class) are less-likely to be able to afford expensive legal representation.

* Young people have fewer social responsibilities which means any conviction / imprisonment will have less impact on others (such as young children).

* Are young, working class, men stereotyped as “real criminals” whereas older middle class women may escape such stereotyping?

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<p>Social Visibility</p> <p>Of crime and criminals</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">* Much youth crime is unsophisticated and unplanned. It is, therefore, more-likely to be witnessed than more-sophisticated crimes.* If police stereotype young people as “potential criminals” they will police them more closely because they are more socially visible (an older person committing a tax fraud, on the other hand, may be socially invisible).* Large amounts of petty youth crimes take place in public places (clubs, the street, etc.) where deviance is more-likely to be witnessed.* Most violent crime that isn’t murder or domestic violence is likely to be committed by young people in situations involving drink, drugs, clear victims and witnesses.
<p>Lifestyle Factors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">* The lifestyles of young people (the young are the most-frequent users of pubs and clubs for example) may expose them to situations where criminal behaviour is possible / likely (especially violent crimes, joyriding and various forms of petty crime – minor thefts, for example).* There may actually be no clear-cut causal relationship between age and crime (that is, young people may not commit more crime simply because of their age). Rather, the fact young people are more-likely to be involved in public drinking, clubbing, etc. may simply mean they are more-likely than the elderly to find themselves in an environment conducive to crime.