

When asked in public opinion polls, Americans consistently list crime as one of the major problems facing the nation today. Citizens believe that crime is more pervasive in American society than at any time in recent memory. Polls show that many Americans believe that crime has gotten so out of control, it will ultimately destroy America from within.

Americans are divided about what causes crime. Some people believe that poverty is a significant factor as the “have-nots” try to become the “haves”. Still other people believe that media violence is to blame – television, movies, music, games, etc – lead young people to lives of crime.

Americans have reacted to crime today by demanding tougher punishment for those who commit crimes. Americans’ demand for tougher punishments have included “three-strikes” laws, longer sentences, capital punishments, mandatory sentences and limits on appeals.

Explore one of the following topics. Take a stand on an issue regarding crime and punishment in America:

- Your ideas on how to reduce the crime rate in America.
- Why the crime rate is not able to be reduced in America.
- Capital punishment as a viable option for reducing the crime rate in America.
- Capital punishment as an outdated and cruel form of retribution towards criminals in America.
- Gun control is a viable option for reducing the crime rate in America.
- Gun control is not a viable option for reducing the crime rate in America.
- Longer prison sentences is a viable option for reducing the crime rate in America.
- Mandatory sentences is a viable option for reducing the crime rate in America.
- Three-strikes and you’re out laws are a viable option for reducing the crime rate in America.
- A limit on appeals is a viable option for reducing the crime rate in America.
- How do we get people to follow the “rules of society”?
- Why is it necessary that people violate the norms of society (functions of deviance)?
- Other: see me for confirmation of your topic.

Alternative option:

- Explain the following quote by Howard Becker: “It is not the act itself, but the reaction to the act that makes something deviant”.

You will assume the “hot seat” in front of the class and state your opinion via speech, presentation, etc. You must be an *expert* in your specific area. This means having statistics to reference, peer reviewed information to cite, professional opinions, and the knowledge to answer questions. Your time will be limited to 10 minutes at the most. You may use presentation software, notes, and other aids. You must submit a 1 page (minimum) - 2 Page (maximum) typed written summary of your stance at the end of your presentation. You will be graded on your “stand” (ability to back up your argument) and your written component.