



General Certificate of Education  
Advanced Subsidiary Examination  
June 2012

## **Critical Thinking**

## **CRIT2**

**Unit 2 Information, Inference and Explanation**

## **Source Material**

**This source material is to be read in conjunction with the questions in unit CRIT2**

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**Document A**

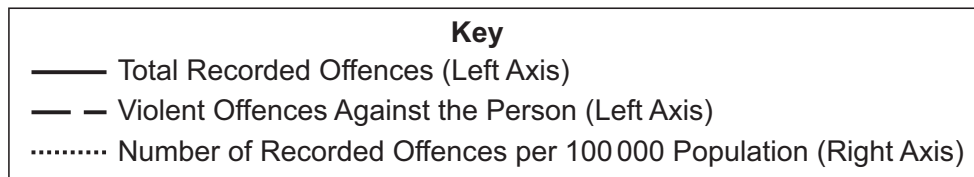
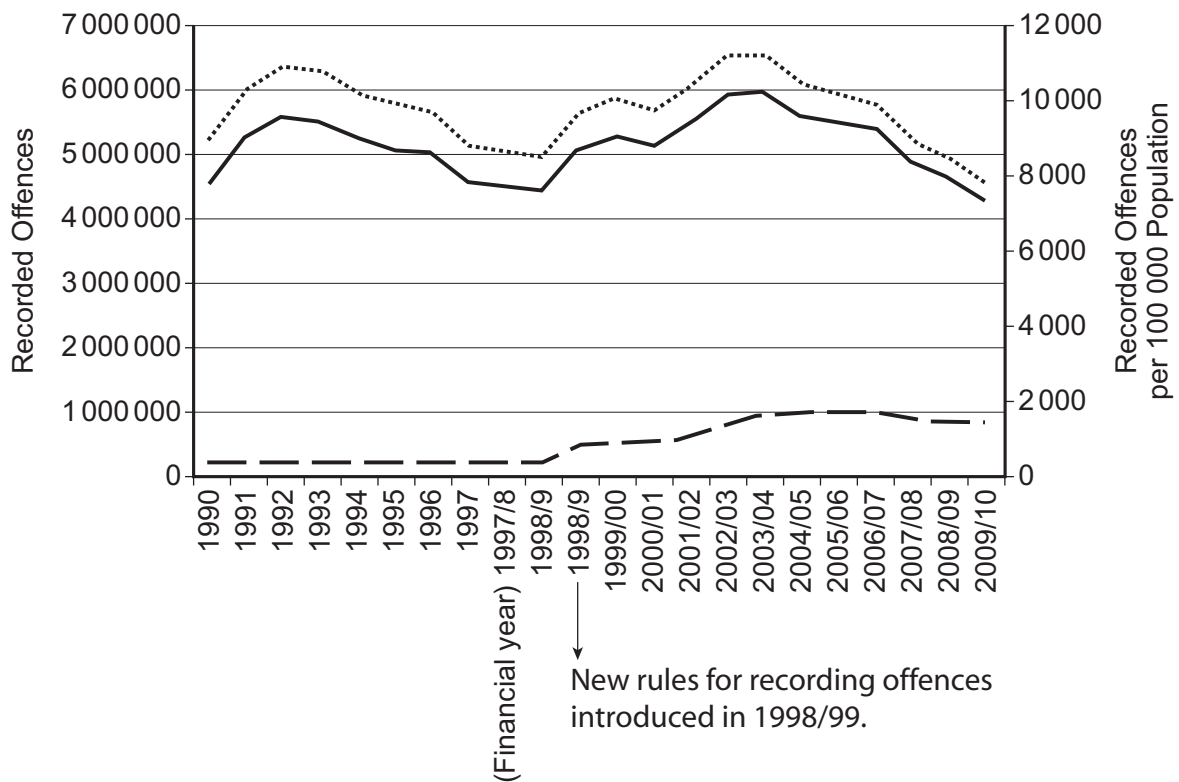
- 1 Ken Clarke, Secretary of State for Justice, said that the criminal justice system “falls short” of what is required. He is entirely right; half of ex-prisoners return to crime within a year of their release. His solution is fewer prisoners and more punishment in the community. This is not only mistaken, but risks dangerously reversing the recent fall in crime.
- 2 Under the mistaken belief that crime has fallen across the Western world, Clarke has claimed that he can reduce the prison population by an estimated 3000 without allowing crime rates to rise. Yet there is a fundamental flaw at the heart of his reasoning. It goes without saying that a country’s prison population is not the sole cause of its respective crime rate. Nonetheless, the general correlation between rates of imprisonment and levels of crime is striking.
- 3 Dismissing this correlation between prison population and crime, Clarke has claimed that “you can’t prove it one way or the other”. Indeed, there is no universal trend that applies uniformly across all countries. However, peaks in crime rates tend to be associated with a significant reduction in the prison population.
- 4 This trend can be observed in several countries, for instance Denmark and Portugal, but the clearest example is Italy. In 2007, the total number of police-recorded offences catapulted by over 160 000, following a mass pardon of prisoners the previous year. The crime rate only began to fall once the prison population crept up towards its 2006 level.
- 5 Reducing the number of prison places may reduce the amount spent on prisons, but it will only lead to increased spending through the courts, probation, the police and alternative sentences, as we are left with higher crime rates.

*Carolina Bracken is a Research Fellow at the think-tank Civitas.*

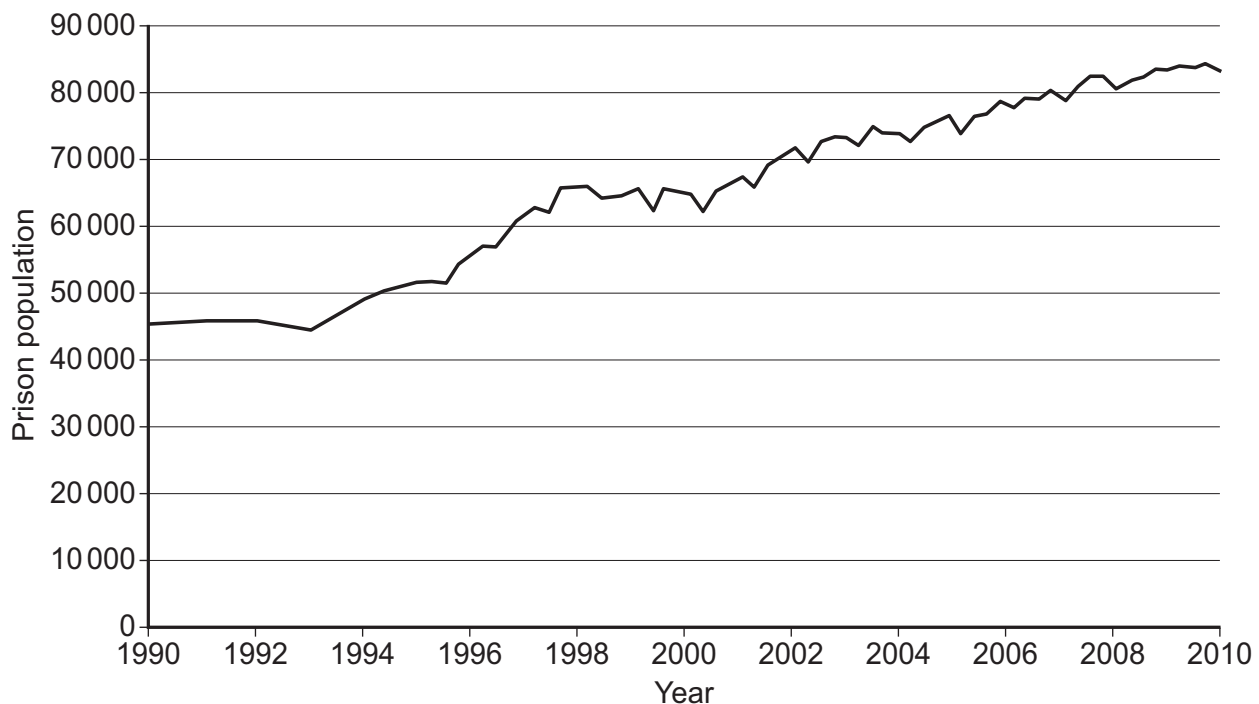
Source: adapted from CAROLINA BRACKEN, *The Daily Telegraph*, 8 December 2010

## Document B

**Graph 1: Recorded Crime 1990–2009/10 (UK)**

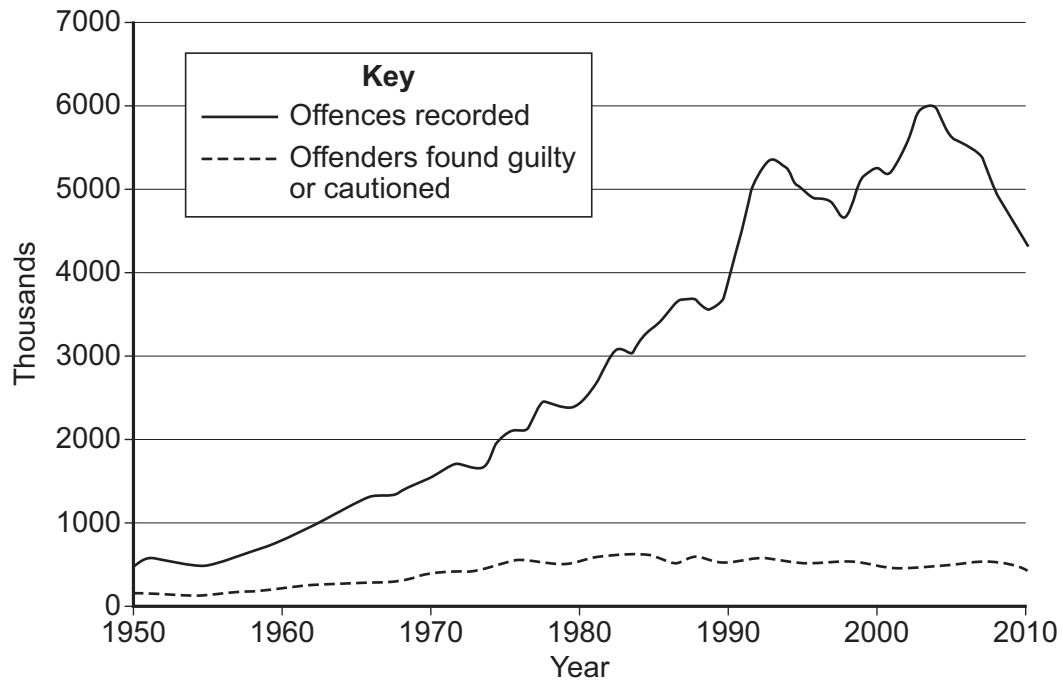


**Graph 2: Number of prisoners (UK)**

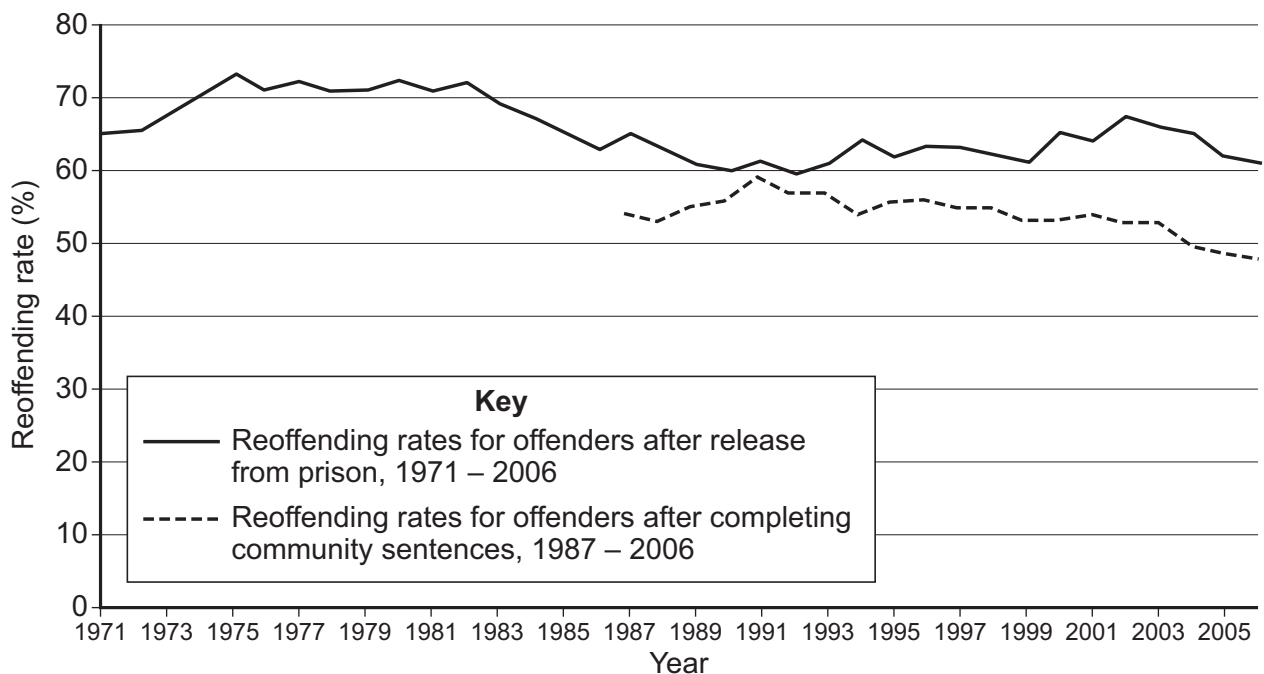


Source: p.4, *Offender Management Statistics Quarterly Bulletin, July to September 2010, England and Wales*, Ministry of Justice Statistics bulletin, 27 January 2011 © Crown Copyright

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**Graph 3:** Recorded crime and offenders found guilty 1950–2010 (UK)

Source: Ministry of Justice © Crown Copyright

**Graph 4:** Reoffending rates for offenders after release from prison, 1971–2006 (England and Wales)Source: pages 115-6, *Compendium of reoffending statistics and analysis*, Ministry of Justice Statistics Bulletin, 4 November 2010 © Crown Copyright

## Document C

**Table 1:** Reoffending 9 years after release from prison (UK)

The following data are based on tracking 42 721 ex-prisoners after release from 2000 onwards. All data are cumulative.

Follow-up period	Reconviction rate	Severe offence rate
3 month	19.9%	0.2
6 month	30.8%	0.4
9 month	37.9%	0.6
1 Year	43.0%	0.8
2 Year	55.2%	1.6
3 Year	61.9%	2.5
4 Year	65.8%	3.1
5 Year	68.4%	3.8
6 Year	70.4%	4.4
7 Year	71.8%	5.0
8 Year	73.0%	5.5
9 Year	74.0%	6.0

### Definitions:

- **Reconviction rate:** The proportion of ex-prisoners who are reconvicted
- **Severe offence rate:** The number of serious offences resulting in a reconviction per 100 ex-prisoners - for example, violence against people.

Source: p.91, *Compendium of reoffending statistics and analysis*,  
Ministry of Justice Statistics Bulletin, 4 November 2010 © Crown Copyright

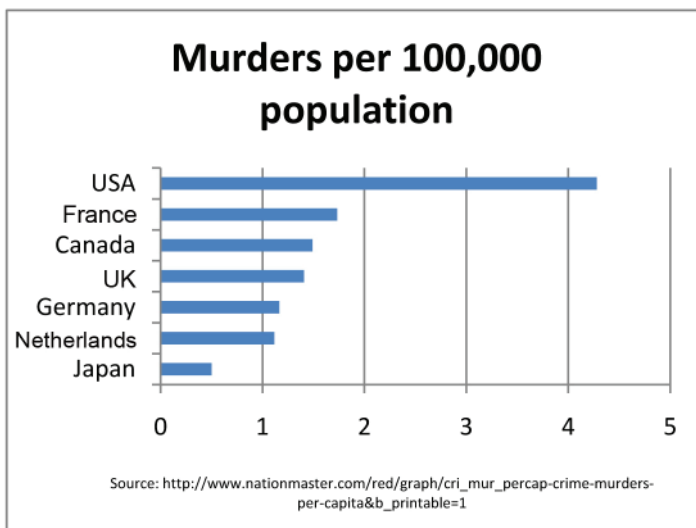
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## Document D

Some people argue that increasing the number of prisoners works, in that it reduces crime. I disagree. Surely for places that already lock up a lot of people, imprisoning more would actually increase crime. It would mean locking up people who were, on average, less dangerous than the ones already behind bars and some of those new inmates would emerge from prison as more accomplished criminals than if they had received community sentences.

In the Netherlands, both prison population and crime rate have been falling. New York cut imprisonment by 15% between 1997 and 2007 but reduced violent crime by 40%. Compare international rates of murder and imprisonment (see graphs). Putting a lot of people in prison does not mean automatic security.



It may not match common sense but a less punitive system would work better because swift and certain penalties deter more than harsh ones. Money could be spent on cost-effective supportive methods, such as better policing, drug treatment or probation.

Finally, the pain that punishment inflicts on criminals themselves, on their families and communities should also be taken into account – it makes us bad, not better.

**END OF SOURCES**

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